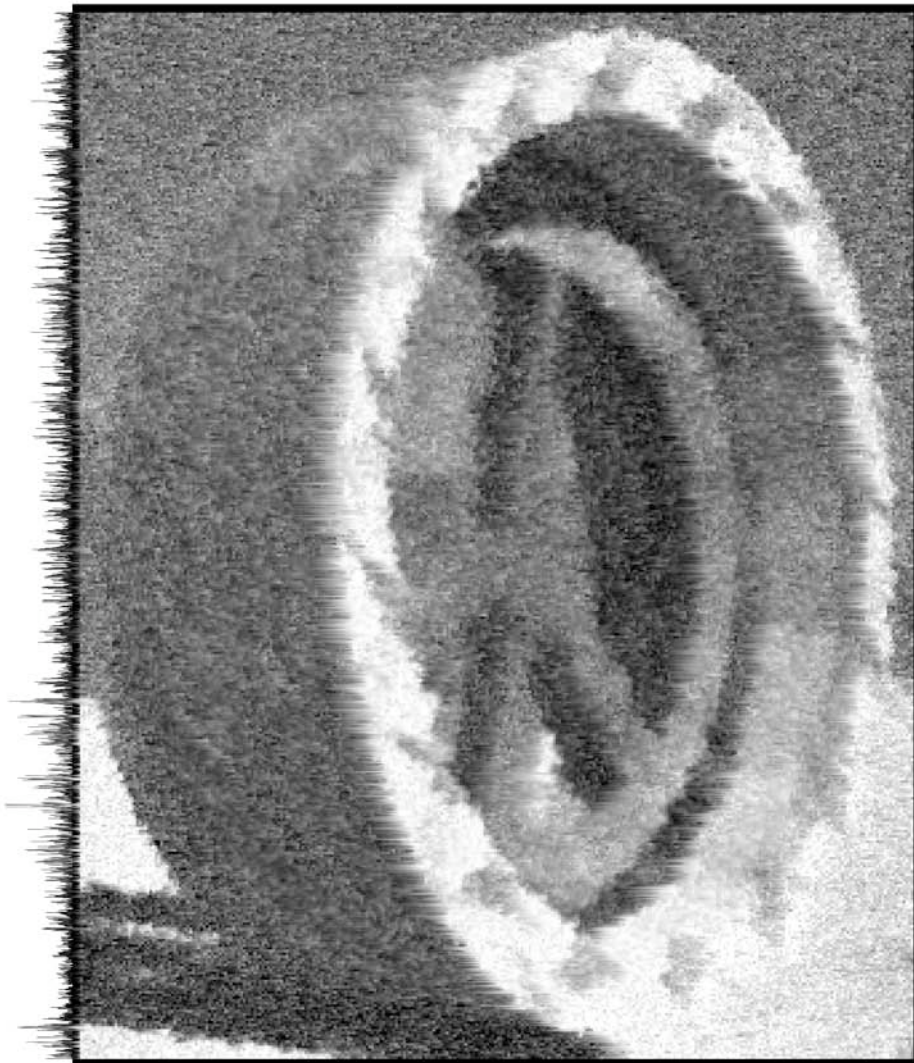
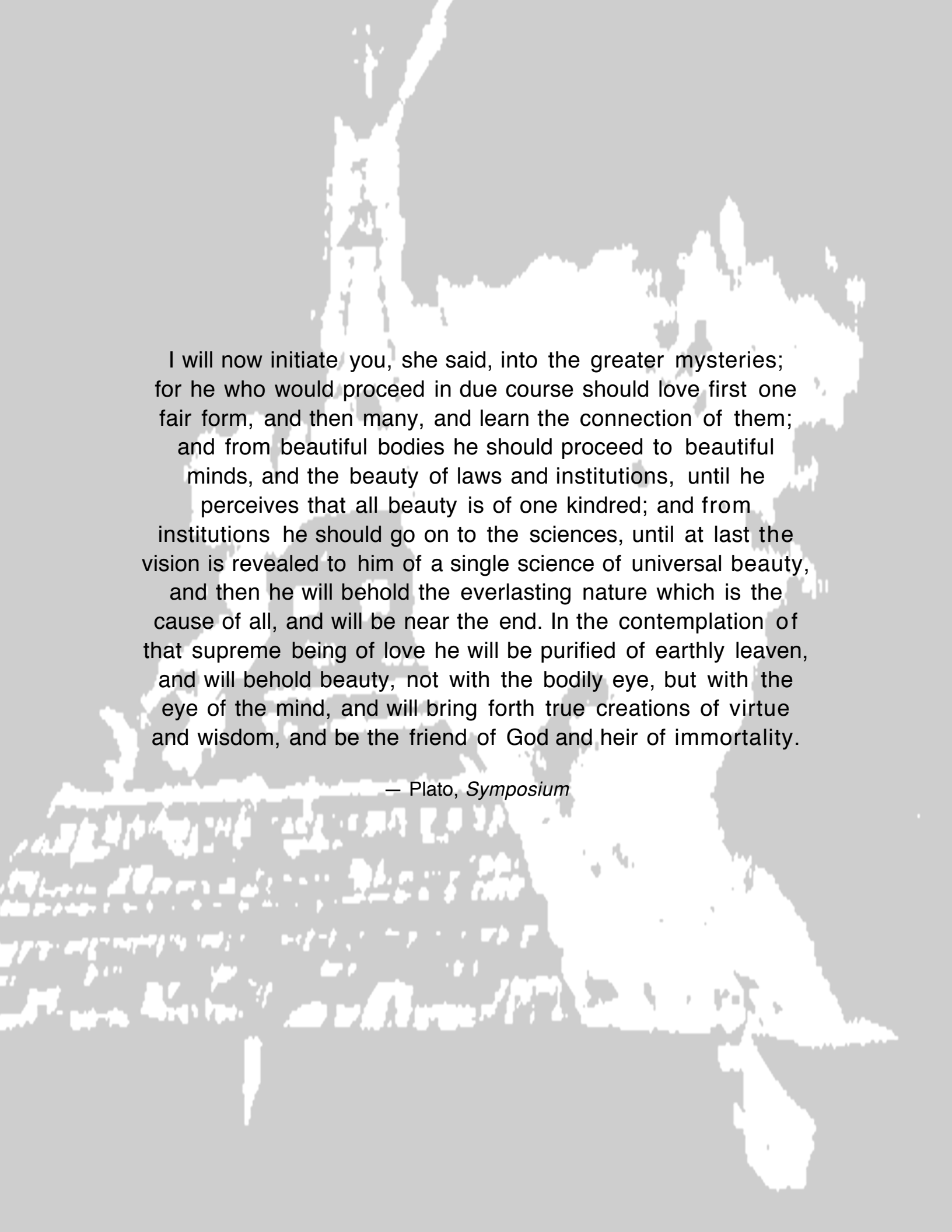


The Cenacle

Number 49 • October 2003



Prayer Wheel, Burning Man 2003
Black Rock City, Nevada



I will now initiate you, she said, into the greater mysteries; for he who would proceed in due course should love first one fair form, and then many, and learn the connection of them; and from beautiful bodies he should proceed to beautiful minds, and the beauty of laws and institutions, until he perceives that all beauty is of one kindred; and from institutions he should go on to the sciences, until at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science of universal beauty, and then he will behold the everlasting nature which is the cause of all, and will be near the end. In the contemplation of that supreme being of love he will be purified of earthly leaven, and will behold beauty, not with the bodily eye, but with the eye of the mind, and will bring forth true creations of virtue and wisdom, and be the friend of God and heir of immortality.

— Plato, *Symposium*

BURNING MAN 2003

BLACK ROCK CITY, NEVADA

Sunday, August 24, 2003 - near midnight?
Camp AIRIP (Arson Island is Dead) - Black Rock City, NV

-I was feeling detached, foolish, pathetic,
at 3 *ammonita muscaria* mushrooms - much
better - started toward a poem -

Ardor

Stars rhythm. The bleed diminishes.
Fewer words, songs of light.
Increase. Leap.

Monday, August 25, 2003 - 3 p.m. (or so)
AIRID Camp - Black Rock City, NV

- Helped build Sandworm til I gouged my wrist -
a kind girl treated smiling gave me a bracelet so I
shrouded it in that -

caught up journal/agenda - an effort to keep pen
moving no matter what -
if it matters to me, it matters(?)

later afternoon - Center Camp

- Sean wanting to grok deeper, that makes
sense - I'm feeling pen pulling me more often
though to no great end yet - writing while tripping
I finally did - now at Burnip Man - ?

[late] near the Man

Songs of light, ~~what~~ ^{& dreams of} ~~what~~ ^{of} ~~darkened~~ ^{of} glass

Cages of binding smoke
spells blind & blinding

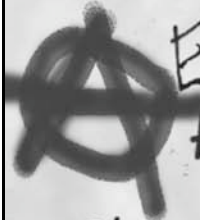
hurry as if anything
truly changes
rapture like spinning wheel glass

Tuesday, August 26, 2003 - sunset
ARID Camp - outside my tent

- I don't have much light to write by but
this first pen to paper today - even a page
today is something good -

Pld program I can't believe I'm mulling it
in Washington, Oregon, or Cali -

[much later - in the city]



Everything is shaman
Anarchy does not assimilate



Thursday, ~~Aug~~ August 28, 2003 - late afternoon
~~ARID~~ Center Camp - No Borders Bookstore - Black Rock
City, NV

- Second day of shilling much better than
first - gave away about 75 books yesterday
today probably double that - out of 37 titles,
14 are gone - a relief really -

tonight beginning of 3 more days of trapping
I think - I don't know

thinking about Kassi all week -

What about her? She has my trust -
I like her a lot - but I don't know if
I could be monogamous or if I'd be good
for her - I think she's in love with me -

Pen moving sluggishly this week-

Friday, August 29, 2003 - afternoon
No Borders Bookstore - Black Rock City, NV

- Last night I tripped AMT & ayup - it
didn't go anywhere in particular - danced
a lot, saw Pink Floyd's "The Wall" - sat in
a portapotty - napped a couple of times -

To do "Arbor" right I'll need notes,
music, & tripping - this place sucks for
mental focus - too strange

Saturday, August 30, 2003 - afternoon
Center Camp - No Borders Bookstore - Black Rock City, NV

I'm going to write "Arbor" tonight -

Wow hours & half a page written -

[8/31/2003] - 1 a.m. (or so) Center Camp - Black Rock
City, NV

- I lost Sean before burn - tripped
& tripping really hard on DIPT - new trip
toy - danced some, sick some, ended up
here wanting to write very badly

6x36 Nocturnes, VI, #26, Lasting
XXVIII. Ardent

More call for songs of light, for a world
flattering with a better friendship for a high beyond
path, beyond gleam, beyond way. The mornings
peal with a blank delight. A petaled
ecstasy. Face turns to dewy face, ^{fantasy} ~~dreams~~
elastic & longing. Songs of light nearer

this year. Many prophets say so. They say
let it go, let it be, the music will shatter,
hearts will remain where ^{when} bones are no more.
Let go, let be, shatter, unto the last,
those promised songs of light, nearing
like seeds on the wind, a kiss, true &

wet, nearing. Others just say love, only love.
Urge it by governance & holiness.
The sky, night's ocean, brilliant smoke
of hooahs, the rising arc of a moaning
back. Love in spinning, shaping fire,
shifting glitter of something done, urge

to crack songs of light from shells wild
of make, big with knitting hymn, happy
conjures. There is no world. Every song
of light will confirm it so. One peirce
with the ardor of a wish, the truth of a hint
remembered in a dream.

More call for songs of light & I believe
believe the hands multiply toward the
task. Yes by reason & unraveling mesmer.
Let go, let be, shatter. What will
open many hearts, awful & raw,
cut without mercy, wipe beauty.

Sunday, August 31, 2003 - afternoon
AIRID camp - Black Rock City, NV

- Well I got "Arden" out of the night, the
burn was pretty good, sick in portapotties
several times - danced a few times -

"Arden" at Center Camp I was very fucking
high, sat for a long time - I was
writing at far edge of coherence -

now tired - the aggravation of breaking
down & leaving tomorrow -

I want to assemble some kind of lasting
life - sitting under large tent droppers
sitting alone - less bothered than I should
be -

next year, I'll try for a camp that matters
from a life that I'll leave good intact
to come here -

yeah whatever

My best experiences here were in writing
sitting

The Cenacle

Number 49 • October 2003

Edited by Raymond Souland Jr. 

Assistant Editor: Kassandra Kramer

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Accompanying cassette features highlights from the June 30, 2001 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting held at Roma Restaurant, New Britain, Connecticut, & the September 29, 2001 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting held in Jim Burke III's car in West Hartford, Connecticut

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Thank you to the *Advocate* weekly newspapers of Connecticut for taking me on as an editor, and giving me some sense of meaningful paid work again. Thank you to Gerry Dillon & Jim Burke III for continued friendship & support. Thank you to Mark Shorette for inspiring me with your hard climb back from oblivion. Thank you to Sean & my Burning Man family for taking me in & aiding my heal as always. Thank you to Kassandra Kramer for many things not shaped like familiar words . . .

DOWN WITH
KING GEORGE

RAYMOND SOULARD, JR.



BLACK ROCKIN' BEATS

Some call it a pilgrimage. Some call it a party. Some leave it as the rather undefinable annual happening it really is. Just as the 1969 Woodstock Music and Art Fair moniker was reduced to reveal its bright lingual core, so too is the Burning Man Arts Festival pronounced most revealingly: Burning Man. The week leading up to this past Labor Day saw over 30,000 people gather in the Black Rock Desert in northern Nevada for this 17-year-old . . . whatever it is.



Burning Man was conceived in 1986 by San Francisco artist and resident Larry Harvey. A small Baker Beach beach burn to honor Summer Solstice proved a catchy idea; 20 people enjoyed the sight of an 8-foot wooden figure burning. The annual burns grew in size as did the edifice burned there—till even San Francisco could not contain the tumult—and in 1990 the Black Rock Desert was tapped to relocate the event.

As much as is likely possible anywhere, the desert provides a blank canvas for a staggering variety of human activity. It takes a couple of days to get used to the hot, dry 90° F-plus days with their occasional 40 or more mile per hour dust storms (called “white outs” for good reason) and the chilly starflooded nights, often below 40° F, but eventually one walks with ease, water bottle constantly at the

ready, on the cracked playa surface, lunar feeling, and regards the distant grey mountains and very occasional apparitions of butterflies and scorpions with a intuition that they too sense how intensely anthropocentric is the action at Burning Man.

Thousands come—artists of all kinds, hippies, punks, goths, candy ravers, and many others—mostly from the Pacific Northwest (San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Vancouver), but from around the globe as well (this writer was on a Greyhound bus for over three days to get from Hartford to Seattle, and then by car with my traveling companion, the Seattle electronic music artist Sean Lamont) to build the most unique city on the planet.

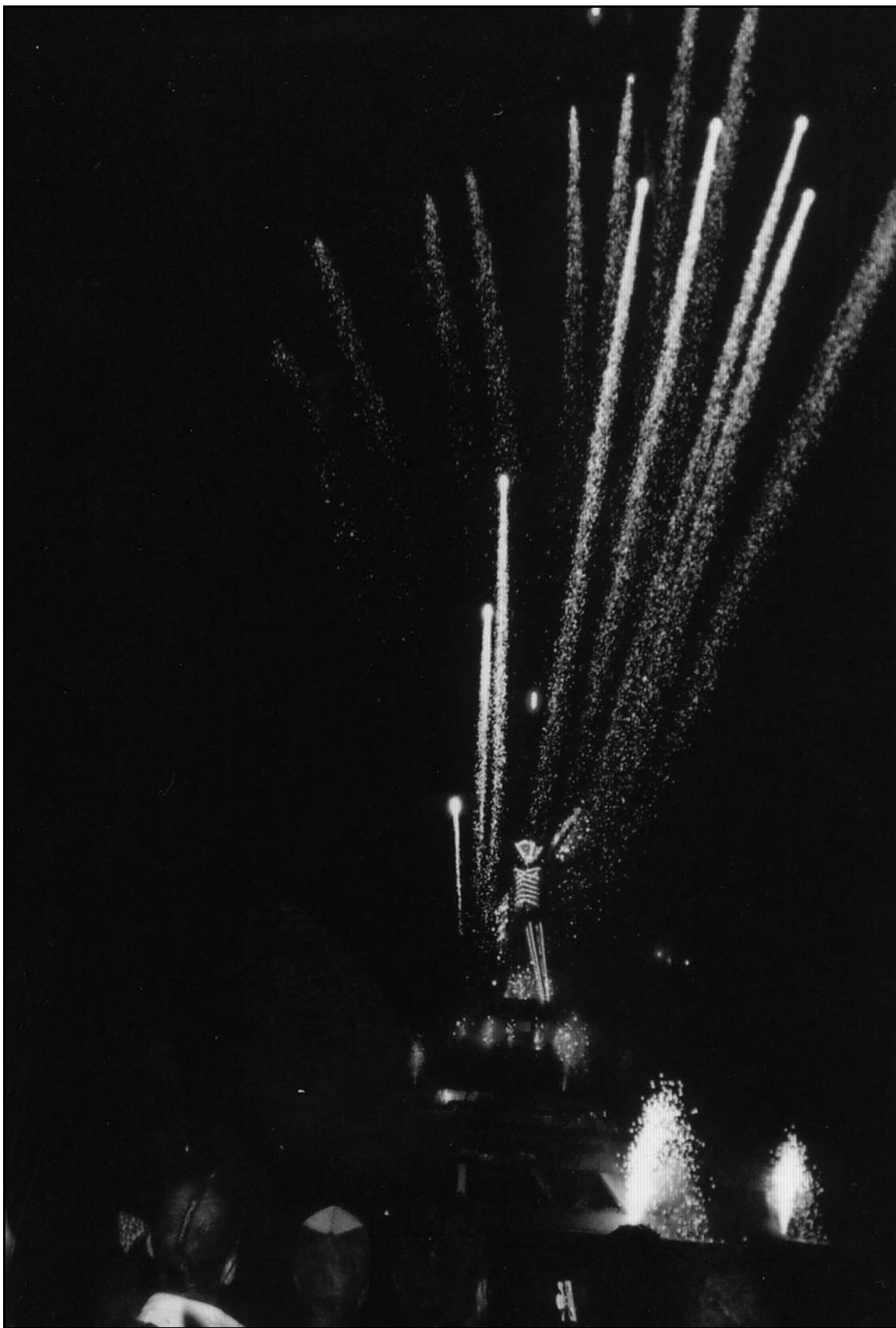
City, its dwellings RVs and geodesic economics are flow of energies not money (no allowed save a stand, and bags back of a tractor-governance hard in the old freak thou wilt but The admission rises in price from over \$200 at the participants of responsibilities Rock City (among



Called Black Rock are mostly tents, domes; its sourced in the and aesthetics vending is single coffee of ice sold off the trailer); and its to elucidate save saw, “do what harm nobody.” ticket (which late winter to gate) advises their while at Black them is “Leave

No Trace,” an ethic taken very seriously), and encourages “Radical Self-Expression.” All week long one is encouraged to “piss clear” (that’s even the name of one of BRC’s newspapers) by chugging water constantly. The ticket also warns of the possibility of death—as was the tragic fate of Katherine Lampman, a sophomore at the Academy of Art College in San Francisco, after she was hit by an art car.

By mid-week the city glows by sun and moon—or rather this year, bright Mars, nearer to our planet than it’s been in many thousands of years—with the fruits of creativity and industriousness. The Burning Man theme this year is “Beyond Belief,” described thusly at the BM website: “Our theme will occupy that ambiguous territory that lies between reverence and ridicule, faith and belief, the absurd and the



stunningly sublime. The human urge to make events, objects, actions, and personalities sacred is protean. It can fix on and inhabit anyone or anything.” Among the expressions of this theme was the 80-foot-tall Temple of Honor devoted to the spirits of the living and the dead, and many smaller works of commentary speaking seriously or mockingly or sometimes both to the sacred, what moves invisible but powerfully through and among us. Watching a band of glass spinners at their trade, and the many twirlers of fire sticks, whips, candleabas and such gave just as exciting and intimate a feeling of the holy burning brightly before one’s eyes.

Saturday arrives the spectacular non-climax in the form of the now 40-foot man-shaped neon visage atop an elaborate temple being set ablaze in a fantastic display of fire dancers, pyrotechnics and frenzied thousands, some watching while perched in and on art cars shaped like dragons, sharks and even cruising couches. The city immolates that night to the manical thumping of the many rave music camps, roofed by massive sky-high laser displays, filled with the sounds of something that, like the Man himself in his weeklong vigil at the city’s heart, discover to each person there at least some of what the ordinary run of daily life lacks: ritual contrived of one’s own freakish gropings within and without; the freedom to dress wild, mild or bare, to touch and be touched by a stranger’s heart, hand or smile; liberation from the very bars and chains most of us cling to most of the time even as renegade voices within cry “change! dance! burn!”

What does it all mean? Whatever you wish. SFGate.com’s Mark Morford commented on the “sense of entering another planet, of stepping out of reality as you know it an into a place where anything goes and usually does and no one really thinks much of it except that it’s usually pretty relaxed and ridiculous and surreal and friendly and half naked and grinning.”

What matters to me is the burst open window to shake loose for a week, stop connecting A to B by rote and try A to K, hand out books of poetry and fiction from my small press to friendly folks from Istanbul to Eugene, ingest whatever plant or pill hooks my fancy, and sheerly revel in the knowing that every calm and dangerous soul in Black Rock City will disperse again to spread to the larger world its virus of spectral ecstasy, its spirit of whispered healing in the wind, burning possibilities in the night.

For more information, visit www.burningman.com



JUDIH HAGGAI

Pale Glaze over Sunset

As I pour sunset over your long black hair,
existence melts in lakes of love,
honey soothes burnt memories,
warm promises blanket pain.

It's a hug held way past midnight,
as stars *om* their chords so fine,
Mercury dances retrograde,
Fate soon will change.
Rings of Saturn, Neptunes, moons
harmonize their paths for you.

Pale glaze over sunset—
as stars shine their rampant glow.
All's clear for take-off—
planetary blessings for the road.

Upon Waking to Pour the Boiling Water

Rising into the dark—
feet lead towards habitual pathways—
the kettle plugged in, the water ice cold
yet, trust in heart, self in hands.

Upon waking, the water agrees to boil,
the bubbles comfort in sounds of **Let's**
Do it, and yet the mind wanders into
Chai, mint and coffee, as the ringing of
shotguns serenades life's breath.
A choice upon this waking day—

Shall I lurch into the unknown?
Pull out the plug of swampland, bog?
Shall I renew the eucalyptus of change?

Upon this morning, unborn yet stillborn,
as I hold time before it cracks,
a waking chance, a hope—
Shall I pass blindly into habits of old
when dimensions parade in eager competition?

How not, when boiling water sings for me—
Yet, coffee starts caffeine occurrence,
when water hums so fine—

A bird surrenders to the branch—
Let's! the tree whispers—
As kettle rolls to its destination—
And cups raise their empty smiles
to my lips—

Thought with No Direction

She sat toadstooled
one-side up at the bar
brazen and boxed
hard-tack tied and tired—

She called out for another—
Her voice caught the breeze
of the subway heading north—
hitched a ride in the line-up
for the loo—

Fortunate Soo, standing still
while movement did the job—
car shaken, riding til dawn—
She laughed, jumped back into time—

Leading her mule towards the sassafras,
her Hyssop bundles fragrant and cool—
She thought with no direction—
How she passed her timeless blues
so sweetly unrestrained—

And the mountain moved,
making way for her mind—
mule-laden memories,
fallen to pasture, slow and sure—
she passed out, a river of drool,
running downstream—

Love, a lost petunia,
a flurry of sounds,
no way back, the tide
closed in.

Bombasted

Snarling, they push aside their refilled cups,
half-consumed packets of complimentary jive,
mirrored walls locked and barred,
customers glare into menus overdone to death—

Again the roof shakes, walls crack,
soup spills, baguettes deflate—
as bass player takes his cigarette break,
bomb hits midnight outdoor Cafe—

Gone in a flash of shrapnel and horror,
waitresses scream, cellphones ring—
Tel Aviv heaves in nighttime disaster—
bleeding its guts into Mediterranean sky.

Another Sick One, I'm Afraid

Pumped up with excuses—
another sick one, I'm afraid.
Strapped to the past,
linked to foul neuroses,
hooked up IV endlessly,
bad karma, drunk beatings, infinite nightmares—

Tsk tsk diagnosis—
too bad, no hope,
another sick one, I'm afraid.
Choral agreement, Brunhilde sings the blues,
wah wah, vultures cry,
no liver today,
sick one, sick sick one—

Hospital bed burnt to a crypt,
fanned by sheet music
and Stones acoustic sickness—

another
sick one
I'm afraid.

what is

what is
lasts as long as it lasts
it does

what it does
goes as long as it goes
it shows

what works
acts as long as it can
it will

what it wills
as long as will is strong
it leads

what inspires
enlightens those who can see
yin/yang

what is
lasts as long as it is

RAYMOND SOULARD, JR.



BLUE PERIOD

[a new fixtion]

*"A work of art is good if it has
arisen out of necessity."*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

[concluded]

Not yet a paradise, yet always a song, so conclude.
Not a broil of colors, nor a painting of flame, but climb inside.
The human field of tilting noise, the pain of bearing any fully-ripe
thought.
The pain of almost everything, ongoing, vulnerable only to escape.
The tranquil stillness of hooked things, displayed with pride, with
power.

No focused eye here, no steady mind. Not taken by Dream, led, nor
the accelerating crumble into language. A wornout pen, a weakened body,
a flailing intent.

And yet . . . and yet . . . something here ticks on, I can hear it.
Something here keeps moving, a limber old watchman, a real believer,
works when the halls are fat with celebration, drunken with the
festiveness of success, & also when, like now, there is doubt, the candles
are being conserved, the master is away skirmishing uselessly with weaker
neighbors, when the ghosts & fears huddle in every shadow, need to be
killed whilst they breed.

Old watchman, my friend. Surely once a soldier, lover & singer of
the deeper songs . . . or perhaps Merry Muse in workman's clothes? How
could she relinquish her control over me after all? I don't come to this
museum to pick up girls or learn the names of unfamiliar artists, not
really. I come to this museum, to this room, to sit on this bench, to gaze

at her visage, reiterate my choiceless loyalty . . . & find comfort in Her presence, confirm that my life is merely a swish in her greater dance, rediscover my want, want, want, want.

Blue Period. No doors. Just sky.
 No souls, not here, just passing sacks.
 No tears, just the courage to win obscurely.
 Many dreams, many breaths, many words.
 Blue Period. Art slashed with angst joy.
 Blue Period. Song annihilating as it's sung.

Just notes toward something. A freak cracked vision staggering toward the ocean, or the ocean's photo, or a reflection of water, or a spilled tube of blue-green foam.

Wanting to explain, wanting to hustle or seduce this moment awake. Why begin these final pages here? Where else then? Hung things, tranquil, bright, poplars, poppies, wheatstacks, cathedral. Renoir, Monet, Van Gogh, Dégàs, Rodin. The pink cheeks of apples and young girls. Frames should be banned here, they create borders around what cannot be caged.

Notes toward something. A rollicking museum singalong? A dread essay full of lazy killing wonder for the Sunday magazine?

Notes toward everything. A page that spills off itself, smears the waxed museum floor with impatience & fearlessness.

Notes for their own sake. A frothy, wild freedom, the need to never slow—

"Do you want me to paint your face into my picture?" Rebecca asks, pulling at my arm & smiling.

"This is hard, especially with a wornout pen," I grumble.

Rebecca edges closer to me & shows me her pictures. She's places Monet's haystacks in outer space, landed on & hovering around a small meteor; electrified Van Gogh's landscapes with twisting colored noise; and once again done a variation on Renoir's "Dance at Bougival," this time followed its pulse into a hippy nudist colony. The two dancers still wear their hats, tho, hers a deep-red bonnet & his a yellow fedora.

I say nothing & she pinches me.

"It's fine. Let me work!" Then I whisper, "The room is too crowded, I'm too tired, & this needs to push further upward quickly."

She nods. She stands, grabs one of my hands & pulls me up. We go.

A friendly sideburned young fellow with a folded museum map point our way toward the Museum of Fine Arts' Buddhist Temple Room, a nearly-dark place three of whose walls display large Buddhas of different kinds. A rail about four feet tall keeps visitors at a distance but the fourth wall does have benches to sit upon. Ancient lamps hang from the latticed ceiling & many thick pillars around the room's perimeter give it an even greater air of temple-ness.

Rebecca can't draw in this darkness—

"I can but I want to sit & watch you"

So she sits near me marveling that I can scribble legibly in the nearly-complete darkness. Left to ourselves for a few minutes, she kisses my cheek softly.

"Rebecca, there won't be any parts to this final version."

"You told me that. You're just going to go at it straight."

"Yes."

I lean against the wall, tired & tired. Reb's popped off to get a brochure.

"Buddha of Infinite Light! That's your Buddha" she says, laughing, pointing at a silkily dressed Buddha. "Believers in you will end up in your Western Paradise!" she announces, delighted.

People come & go, most daunted by the darkness. The statues are tranquil but I'm not. We leave again.

Now we lie twisted & smouldering in my single bed ZombieTown hovel. Nude but for some underwear because the need to talk lingers.

Rebecca seeks continuously to help me heal not my past but my future. She saw my torpor at the MFA, my inability to maintain the spark. She sits on the ledge of my eyes & considers. She touches me as though this will tell her additional truths.

"What do you think this story lacks?"

"Holy firepower," I say immediately.

"And you don't know how to raise up this firepower?"

"No."

She is quiet. She is no more than her blue-eyed stare on my ledge.

"What if it was the last story?"

"Last?"

"Yes. The final one. These pages you're holding all that remains. You finish. And you stop."

I sit up. "Something might spark."

She's off my shelf but still watching me. "Could you do it?"

"I don't know. I don't write very much else."

"Then maybe it's time for that too."

I look at her now. "You've been thinking about this while?"

She nods, her expression young and helpless.

"So you and I would be together for 92 more pages?"

She doesn't answer.

"I don't know."

"Why don't you write it that way? *Cement Park's* last story. 1981-1998, finally complete." She's pressing me toward this now.

I am excited & don't know why. Suddenly every word matters again!

I am alone. Rebecca kisses my cheek & disappears right after.

The story begins to matter again tonight. Excited, vexed by my choices, me & my pen both begin to feel powerful again.

I continue to think about this idea through today's meaningless workday. So much of this story is about loss, even annihilation, is about the gone. I think back to my touchstone year, 1981, & those few memories from then that move me. The bustrips to Hartford, the movies I went to see. I was 17—all was not lost. Little hard damage had happened yet.

Rich Americus was 21 that year & his new band was briefly very popular. He hadn't met Rebecca; his major lover was Erica, younger than Franny is now but only by a year or two.

Now he is 38 & nowhere near Hartford. He is in Macon, Georgia, a hot, dull Southern town with too many Baptist churches & too much Confederate history.

The downtown contains few bars or decent restaurants. He's been into the swamps on the town's edge, though, & amused himself imagining Franny as a reckless teenager among a pack of boys & shotguns.

Until today, though, there has been no sign of her. Even a visit to her family yielded nothing.

"Americus? Like the town?"

"Yes."

"Your Frances' Connecticut friend."

"Have you seen her?"

"Did you have a fallin' out?"

"No."

Franny's mother is pretty, not much older than Rich. She wears too much makeup & too many baubles & her hair is too fussed with, all in the Southern style, but she is really sweet. And sad.

"Well, I'm sorry to tell you, but we lost our Frances. A car accident."

"Not a snakebite?"

"What?"

Rich keeps his mouth shut.

He visits Franny's grave but knows it contains nothing.

Weeks have passed as nothing has happened.

Today, however, he's sitting up in his College St. boardinghouse bed & remembering the dream he just had.

"Rich, why are you doing this?"

"Franny, I was wrong. I need to find you."

"Didn't Gretta warn you that the rest of your life would be in danger?"

"Franny, I have to try. I can't let you go. It's been my way for too long. It has to stop."

The vision of her clarifies somewhat. Blonde hair, purple eyes. Smiling.

"You really came down here to find me."

"Yes. I was wrong. I love you."

Franny smiles, sighs, decides.

"Go downtown. To that coffeeshop. Coffee Connection. Wait for me."

"So you'll come."

"I mean that you'll be allowed to descend to the world where I am."

"Are you in pain, Franny?"

"No. But it's harder to remember all of that up there. It's harder to care, Rich."

"I love you. I'm coming to get you."

"Bring your guitar."

"Of course. But why?"

Dream ends there.

Rich wastes no time. He entrusts his motorcycle & things to Franny's brother Stevie who promises to send them all back to Connecticut via a long-distance trucker he knows. He says goodbye to Franny's pretty, sad mother, wishing he could tell her something hopeful.

"Franny loved you. She said you were kind & you saw deeply into her. She loved your daughter too."

"Rebecca was wild about Franny."

"Well, you're like family to all of us now. You always have a place to stay when you pass through Macon."

Rich showed up at the bookcluttered, purply-lit coffeehouse in the late afternoon, just as its friendly dark-haired owner was opening up.

Rich sits in the small shop drinking soda. He plays a couple of Beatles songs for the owner.

An hour or two pass as customers drift in & out. Mostly young, they sip coffee & talk to the owner about poetry.

It takes Rich awhile to realize he's no longer in Coffee Connection. He's now sitting on a low boulder in a nearly dark cave. He's still playing a Beatles' song, "Norwegian Wood," as there is noise up ahead in what he now sees as a tunnel descending deeper into the ground. He decides to keep singing, segues into "Tomorrow Never Knows," & walks toward the noise.

*Turn off your mind, relax,
& float downstream,
it is not dying . . . it is not dying . . .*

"Lennon got those words from Leary's *Book of the Dead*." David Time's friend Cohn argues while trying to light up a damp fat joint in the early evening breeze.

Time motions for the joint which Cohn relinquishes & quickly it's lit & passing around the group of a dozen or so long-haired young people.

"Well, I think it's just karma," maintains a blonde girl dressed in what looks like a tie-dye sheet. She's barefoot. She holds a pair of finger cymbals in each hand & habitually praises an insightful comment from someone in the group with a cling! of her bells.

The day is windy but clear & cool; a quick & thorough thunderstorm has sweetened the summer's day. Cornish, New Hampshire, July 1968. Most of the people gathered live on the commune while a few are visitors or prospective members.

"Well, I don't think it matters," mutters a heavily bearded fellow in a green Army jacket. "The Beatles have blown their load. They should break up soon."

Many voices counter this. An insistent female voice, a redhead, rises above the rest. "They're part of us!" She screeches. "We've got to look out for each other. Remember who the enemy is."

"There are no enemies," someone argues.

"We're stupid to decide that based on ages. Some people our age are the worst," insists another.

The fat joint goes quickly, & another is rolled & consumed. Someone turns up the stereo from inside the big house & its outdoor speakers, mounted on treebranches, begin to shake.

David wonders if these no-bullshit sessions accomplish something on some invisible level.

The commune comprises one large building & several smaller ones. The large building is a partly fallen-down mansion, once swiped hard by a storm or something, but so immense that it contains over 20 whole & sound rooms, working electricity & functional plumbing.

Most of the people living in it don't know or care if the commune has any real purpose. They've come up from various colleges, laid out some cash for the commune house fund & commenced to excessive partying.

But there's a core of about half a dozen, all present at this meeting, who intend to go a lot further & still hope to include the rest.

But the meeting disintegrates as couples in the crowd get stoned enough to want to start groping & some of the hardcore partiers began passing around tabs & offering up cocaine.

David hooks Cohn by his elbow & signals to the others in his circle to follow into the house onto the top floor.

"There's too many of them anyhow."

"But aren't we supposed to bring everyone in? Should we be exclusive?"

"How did the meeting break down? We start talking about Leary's communal situation at Millbrook & they start arguing about the fucking Beatles!"

"Do we get rid of them then? Have it be just us?"

"No. Maybe they'll join us but we'll tell them what we're doing at least. That way everyone feels welcomed & respects what we're doing even if they just want to party."

The voices stop. Everyone looks at everyone else. It's agreed.

"We have to start right away," David Time remarks.

Cecile Gray stares at Rebecca fearfully, as though she's just lunged for one of the two pitchers of stout in his hand. "I'm comfortable, Missy. Tonight I'm no drummer."

Rebecca will have none of this. "Cecile, you know you are going to go so why argue with me?"

"And the rest of them? The one in Seattle, the one in Washington? The one who hides in his mansion fair?"

"They'll be here. Just stay here at the bar & I'll tell you when, OK?"

Cecile glares at her, but not really. She's Americus's kid. She acts like him. He's spent too many years following people named Americus into weird abysses to stop now.

Turning back to the bar, Cecile sets down an empty pitcher as Mr. Bob is placing a full one before him.

Grey turns to Dr. Emerson at his right. "You ever get whisked off to Hell, mate, because of a friend?"

Dr. Emerson laughs briefly. "Hawthorne & I visited a Shaker village together."

Emerson turns to his right to the ancient darkling visage of Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker. "Rebecca tells me that the young people liked my discourse with them."

Knickerbocker's eyes are thick with moisture. Very shakily he sips at his whiskey'd coffees. Says nothing.

"They tell me they want to believe in virtue & do good unto their society. Some even confided a desire to pray. But they say they can trust noone. They seem to clump together for protection, almost for their very lives!"

Dr. K speaks slowly & shakily. ***"When I was a young man, prayer for me was the day's sweetest engagement. My soul laid out my bundle of cares & sins & unyielding prayer would eventuate a coherence. I found meaning again after prayer. Stars, crowds, children. Much meaning,"*** he trails off.

Mr. Bob comes by to lead Dr. Knickerbocker to the couch in Rebecca's manager's office. Then he fetches a pint of ice-water & arranges a stool across the bar from Dr. Emerson.

"He'll be OK."

"No," counters Emerson sadly. "I fear he won't be."

Death of a fat man in Harvard Square, July 24, 1998, 8:17 p.m. The choking death of a large ego, the hanging death by his grey braid suddenly tied tightly to a branch ten feet above the Au Bon Pain courtyard flood, the embarrassing death of a gigantic wit who glances easily around between chess moves, now finds the dozen sweaty layers of his tub-large belly exposed, just as he had silently checkmated his opponent, the burning death caused by his ugly rippling beard & his cigarette lighter, the death of a foul live thing of no worth to this planet or any other, the gesticulating intellectual, the cynical vat, the death of the eyeglassed man in Harvard Square, choked by his assumptions & prejudices, his inability to respect Self or Nature, perhaps a sharp knife, serrated, the kind that rips walrus bellies open with one try, death by avenging mediocrity for the nothingness that his life emanates like a fat man's sweaty asshole, death by morality, its paucity in that shitlarge frame, its lack in his soul, whatever left of it he hasn't gnawed or smoked, death of the fat man sitting there in that courtyard, his mouth greedy & untamed, his heart with no chance because his ego knows better, death of the fat man while his bright bag of comic books & favorite new porn Website await him at home, death of the fat man—me? I didn't do nothing. Just wrote it all down & smiled—

"Franny!" Rich is excited thinking the noise ahead in the low-ceiling'd tunnel is her. But even as he decides to run toward it, he cannot bring it into view

"A fucking trick," he growls. The tunnel's ceiling is getting lower & he bumps his head, twice, while hurrying.

"Franny!" He hadn't really believed in the Orpheus & Eurydice aspect of his pursuit. He didn't believe Franny was really dead for that matter. Not really. Merry Muse? Godd the small pink bear? It was someone's trick, someone's lesson.

Too ego to believe.

He's no Orpheus. He's a good lyricist, decent guitarist & fair singer. He'd need his band to really do what Orpheus did—convince all the dead spectres in Hell to return his wife Eurydice.

"Franny!"

The tunnel was now a crawling width only; Americus pushed his guitar ahead of him.

"I'm no Orpheus, Franny," he murmured softly. "I need my band." And . . . would they come? Could they come?

"Soulard!"



"I'm here."

"I'm not crawling anymore."

"You have to."

"No, I don't. Stop this."

"No, Rich. The story is in motion. We have to follow it through."

"No! Stop it!"

"Rich, what do *you* suggest? This is page 223. There's no going back."

"Is this the last story? My last story?"

"How do you know that?"

"Ray, let me have a better ending. There's another way. This is not yr best."

"You're tricking me. Start crawling!"

"No, I won't. I'll tell you why."

"Why?"

"Because you're trying too hard. Let me come back to Connecticut. Give me a real chance to win her back."

"Sue, what is that about you? Why are you with us?" demanded Rachel-Nicole, her brunette hair short & shiny, her lovely body wearing little but a man's paint-spattered shirt & outsize boxer shorts.

Cohn was crying & it was Creamy Sue who was holding him, crooning to him.

Hartlee sucked hard on the golden stone hash pipe everyone else had turned down. Hair shaved to protest the Viet Nam War, eyes jackknife sharp & blue; I could sense him withdrawing into his music. His fingers tapped the ground lightly, playing a longed-for keyboard.

Sue spoke. "I'm sorry, Cohn." Cohn was what everyone called him. "You're a queer! I didn't think you'd take it like this."

Cohn is skinny, stringyhaired. He's a serious poet. Noone questions that. Rachel-Nicole dances & sculpts, in tandem. Creamy Sue is a painter. It's how she got her name.

"Is it the acid, David? Are we getting off the right path?"

I'd founded the commune—or at least got permission from the owner who knows my parents. I've been to San Francisco. I pulled this group together out of partiers & kids that fell on the place when it was advertised.

I've got the good acid. The partiers say I only dispense it to willing pussy & boy-slaves.

They're wrong. I wish I could give it to everyone here but I can't. The partiers have plenty of drugs. They don't like me because they think I've got more planned.

Acid's funny. It'll show you Godd right now one time & bite your ass the next. Aldous Huxley & all the rest say set & setting are everything. Who you're with, where you're doing it, your mood.

The fourth floor is the worst in the mansion. We're in its one safe room—the rest have rotten floors. It's a big room. We painted it white weeks & weeks ago. Then Sue made us leave & she stripped naked & used her thighs, breasts & buttocks to add color. The sun comes in at dusk, through a big window we take turns washing. Sometimes we've tripped & lain naked, the five of us, before that window, peaking as the dusk billows fully out.

But out crisis. Cohn's pulling a monogamy trip on us. I understand somewhat. Sue fucks like a goddess. She kept me hard inside her for over an hour then she gave me a blowjob that made me weep. Her body is like high tide.

Rachel-Nichole is sweeter, gentler, candy not cocaine. Cohn, the self-defined "skinny New York Jewish queer" survived her.

He's my friend. But he's only confident when he's writing. He's trusted me so far about the drugs & sex—but Creamy Sue has done him in.

"Cohn!" I snap. He shakes his head & clings to Sue. I try to remember which drugs he's on. Speed, probably. Cocaine, too. Not my favorites.

"Cohn!" I yell. He looks at me, sort of, his eyes red & swirling.

"Sue, back off," I order. Sue doesn't move. She's told me good sex & true art are what she wants. She's told me that even acid isn't much to her anymore.

I stand like a threat, Sue backs off & Rachel slips into her place. Sue hasn't forgiven me for the time I wouldn't come in her mouth no matter how many of her techniques she tried. I didn't pull out either. I stayed hard & taut inside her mouth til she pulled back & yelled at me.

Hartlee is edging toward the door. He likes me, likes my drugs, but is wondering if he should go it alone.

"Are we ready?" I say aloud.

Noone replies.

I pace the room, the way I usually address them. I allow my thoughts voice. "I don't know. But why not? Why not start? Why not tomorrow morning?"

They all sit frozen. Do I have the guts? Do they?
I walk out there & then.

I turn back to the bar as the door to the bandroom swings slowly shut.

"She says it's going to happen tonight," I remark to my friend Jim Reality III, short dark blonde hair, grey eyes, large frame, tall glass of gin in his hand. 11th tall glass of gin to pass through his hand tonight.

"Ah-hah," he smiles & laughs softly at an amusing patch of empty space.

"Jim! Noisy Children are going to play here tonight!" I cry.

Jim turns a bleary but beatific smile toward me, almost. "We're all going to play here tonight!" he cries without spilling his drink.

Mr. Bob notices my lack of audience & sidles over. "Pint of stout, bud?"

I nod. He returns with a fine glass of Guinness for me & an ice water & stool for himself.

He sips, struggles for words.

"You know too?"

"Son, may I speak frankly?"

"Yes."

He wipes the clean counter before him. "I don't know that your fight here is over. That you can end it so soon."

"Why?"

"You're tired, Ray. You've been ill & you're fighting circumstance."

"Yes. You're right."

"You want it all over. I felt that way when I was drinking. The team was losing but the season wouldn't end. The owner wouldn't fire me because he was hopeful & loyal. He knew I could do better if I got better.

I just wanted to stop. Everything. I'd drink in the dark in my hotel room, not to get drunk, but to sleep. Only my dreams went on."

He stops. He can't tell anymore. He's hoping I'll respond.

I bang back my drink. Then I squeeze his wrist, hard, and depart for the bandroom. Rebecca.

She's straightening up the six paintings she's done recently, all variations on Picasso's "Blue Period" pictures.

She looks at me, her mouth tight. "It's going to happen tonight."

"I know."

"What did he say to you?"

"He wants to go out on stage not in some contrived bullshit underworld."

"Then what was the point of all he's done so far? Ray, he's spent months away from me & it was all for nothing!" She's shaking her head almost unconsciously.

"You're letting it fall apart!" she yells at me so fiercely I back away. "This is my world! Why are you doing this? What's next?"

"I don't know," I confess. "Are you saying you don't want this to be the last?" I say weakly.

"I don't know. But you've got to do it the way you've always done it."

I point to her new pictures because they are starting to move.

Dr Emerson is querying Mr. Bob about events. "Are these occurrences . . . supernatural?"

Mr. Bob shakes his head. "No. They're what you'd call strange but they're part of things around here, too. It was bound to happen during your visit sometime."

The Doctor thinks of all he's already seen. But still her trembles. "Young Rebecca is a strong, brave girl. More woman than her age suggests. But I observed her frightened face shortly ago. That deeply disturbed me, Sir."

Mr. Bob nods. "Her father's coming home."

"Has he buried his dead wife finally down South?"

"No. He's still trying to recover her."

"Sir!"

"Like that Greek story. Orpheus & Eurydice."

"Eurydice," Dr. Emerson corrects. He ponders. "The story has many versions, even some that predate the Greeks. It appears he succeed in his quest in some of these more obscure tellings."

"Obscure. That sounds like Souldard," Mr. Bob mutters, briefly cross.

"Perhaps I can help," says Dr. Emerson brightly. "Act as kind of a scholarly advisor!" And he's off his stool before Mr. Bob can grumble another dark opinion, all this moodiness perhaps brought on so suddenly by the staggering appearance of Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker from the manager's office where for hours he had peaceably dozed.

The fat man who died in Harvard Square tonight has been hauled away in an extra-long red & white Cambridge Ambulance Co. ambulance. I have my courtyard table back & am pleased.

But what of this final story idea? What of it? I've been sitting in this courtyard, at a table at a certain spot, for almost six years; & indoors during bad weather for the same length of time.

While the crowds of men play speed chess, click of pieces, click of timers. While pretty college girls sit amongst themselves & laugh or come with dates & wait politely to be impressed.

Packs of Boston-visiting foreigners. Tourist families with kids; tireless little legs. Lousy musicians & good ones.

Cool air like tonight. Tonight the air is young & fresh, is eager like a 21-year-old at what Friday night might bring.

If this is the last story in *Cement Park*, & I intend to finish it by Sunday afternoon, & I'll be leaving the state for a visit tomorrow, then tonight is the last night I'll write one of these stories here. 10:23 p.m.—just 97 minutes left!

There's no help in this decision. I am cowering before it.

Two regulars discussing banking history. A table of pretty girls sitting with their sullen male friend. He wants pussy, now. Who doesn't? Enough fresh pussy, eager cock to lead this square into überorgasm, now. Can't come too soon.

It's getting cold. But there's more to say.

Electric lamps. Police car lights. Brakelights.

Nice ass. Nice tits. Nice place. Can I do it?

And the creaky, iniquitous MBTA? The many pages writ aboard its dubious rails? The latenight halfempty cars of the redline that runs over the Longfellow Bridge between Cambridge & Boston? The orangeline I'll be on shortly bound slow & sullen for ZombieTown, Mass.?

The dubious young cynicals who know nothing save the uppermost crust of cultural mold? The sleepy security guards & drunken crowds of couples? The good readers of late night books? The unaccountable denizens of late night who do not exist in the sunshine?

Crossing Longfellow Bridge right now, the modest skyline of Boston across the black Charles River; its few lit towers.

The silence amidst the talk. The solitaires amidst the groups.

Predawn downs on Canal St., feeling sick again & lost, passing by a crowded restaurant where human souls are settling for the least thing that could be called music & whatever clean pantied orifice that's willing.

They drive fairly new cars of shiny, low quality. Such are their lives.

I'm sitting on the 60s Rock feelings how most of whatever mattered is gone.

Their cars have good headlights and run on gasoline. They have radios that will play loudly if they like.

Some have radar detectors for prowling cop cruisers & speed traps.

They have four tires each.

They have storage space.

This all is enough. A car wash once in awhile. A tuneup. They can go fast. They can stop at red lights.

The Rohm Tech building on Canal Street has been empty for months. I found out it contained Rohm Tech for many years. A glass sign far down the building's side still advertises it.

Weeds have grown up around the front steps. Old wet-now-dried copies of the *Boston Globe* lie around in folded copies. A nearby lamp flickers on & off.

It's not ZombieTown time here, truly, but that doesn't happen til midnight & I'm too tired to wait

I'm lost on earth tonight,
 lord, no-lord
 I know my way home
 but that isn't enough
 it's never been before.

One final stop for sickly Soulard on his potentially final tour——

1640 Puritan-era cemetery my nightly visitation through its calm grass, strong trees, quiet spirits, dark cap of sky overhead, sometimes speckled

Bell Rock Cemetery my love of your allowing me to pass through, & sometimes I am not very civil, ready to weep or shout

Spirits unloved by local denizens with their squirt guns & 12-paks of Bud Light, their doped TV minds feeling promised always more

The Amante Tamarack near one of your mausoleums one night so drunk I was & missing Amante I kissed it

I love you, Bell Rock Cemetery, because you are always subtle & fine, never demanding, never even judging like I am.

Now, Soulard goes home to his sleep & his worries over what next on these pages—

I am on an interstate bus travelling from Boston to Hartford. The bus is air-conditioned, comfortable enough. Its 50 or so seats are less than half-filled but there'll be a stop in Newton in a few minutes to pick up more people.

The day outside is sunny & green, cool by New England-in-July standards. The traffic on this highway, called by most the Mass Pike, is steady & somewhat slow.

A young woman sits across the aisle from me reading a woman's magazine, one of those things that reinforces cultural strictures & norms while pretending to report on something called "fashion." Such magazines titillate while offering corporate-sanctioned instructions for the attiring of the young female body & behavior of the young female mind. Playing the young female mind's hosts of worries & insecurities like a Steinway grand piano, magazines such as this one rape the female mind of any independence of thought or action, & charge several dollars to do so.

This said a prelude to a carnal valentine to this woman with whom I exchanged only a few pleasant words. She is lovely. Eyes the color of a bluesky spring day in the Green Mountains. Body as fecund & moving as any wild New England meadow. Blonde hair contrasted by lightly tanned skin. I wish for her more than magazines that will invade her bedchamber to dress her & foul her young fantasies with indoctrination armies.

She's sleeping with her face to me & in this moment I recognize the right & wrong in this world.

Before really grown, our heads have been fatly filled with prejudices, conventions, expectations. What's wild in us is thrashed until it whimpers in pieces or else is directed unnaturally tightly toward an acceptable end. Money. Power. Marriage. Our dreams are devalued because they can never really be caught & used.

This story is about ideals, about love that survives its own destruction, about utopian projects that can't quite escape. I think that utopian impulses succeed, however, not because they escape, which they don't, but because new persons come along to try them anew.

My young blonde acquaintance wears neon pink toenail polish that nicely matches her little neon pink panties. I imagine her breasts puppy-

soft to the touch & bunny-shivering when her nipples are softly taken into one's mouth. Her hips are round & built to maneuver with a cock deep between her thighs. Her voice is soft. I hope every man who ever loves her goes slowly & does not fail to gently probe into her maidenhair with his tongue. I wish her well. She is still young & cosmically connected with today's bright blue sky & the deer sleeping in the forest & every New England tree. Her dreams still emanate from her heart & her body still hopes to be sated as well as filled.

I wish I was so young. I often crawl to books for news of the universe instead of simply standing tall & holding out my hands. Sometimes I am lucky & stumble onto the kosmos' true plane by mistake, and feel sunshine-warm its welcome & how its warm rain marks me with gladness.

I don't know where this story will go hereon. It floats freely.

"Rebecca, talk to him. Bring him back to us!"

"No. He has to do it his way. I trust him. He knows that. And he trusts me to wait for him."

"What is he doing?"

"He's writing. This is the best thing. It's worse when he doesn't."

"Can't you just see if he's OK. We all like him too! Sometimes he acts like noone does!"

"Hi."

"Hi, Rebecca. I'm glad to see you."

"Are you OK?"

"You don't have to ask, do you?"

"It's everyone else. They want to know. We've got them all worked up & ready &, um, now they're waiting."

"I tried talking to a girl. In my own world. It was stupid."

"Ray, just let it happen. You don't have to self-destruct."

She leads me into the bandroom. Something is finally going to happen.

We all get up before dawn & meet on the 4th floor. Today is the day. July 25, 1968.

It takes awhile for the others to set up. Creamy Sue sets up blank canvases all over the room, some on the floor, some on easels, one hangs

in mid-air suspended from the ceiling by wires. It swings back & forth a little.

Hartlee hauls in some of his electronic music equipment & several guitars. He also sets up the recording & video equipment so we'll have a record of doing what we're doing as well as the work itself. I find all this too complicated, too much like the Merry Pranksters, but say nothing.

Rachel-Nicole wears only her boxer shorts today & she says that's only until we start. She sets up a place for her sculpting—a table with a large cutting board on top of which sits a mighty chunk of grey clay.

Cohn says he's going to write his poems on the wall—& shows us his magic markers. And also on the chalkboard he's hauled up from storage & rolled across the room to an empty corner. And on clothes—Victorian-era suits & dresses for which he has brought thick elementary school wax crayons.

I have my notebooks & no more. Oh, I have the drugs. LSD-25, potent beyond belief, the last precious page from my San Francisco trip & we're going to use most of it.

The day outside is warm & sweet. "We're going to go outside while we're peaking," I say; holding up a pink silken rope, I add, "We'll keep together with this, all of us attached to it. It will mean trust to do this, a lot of it."

We're sitting in a tight circle now. Our close-together-warm is a comfort to all of us.

"Have you ever done this much acid?" Rachel-Nicole asks. Her face is delicate, prone to looking embarrassed or pained. Her breasts are small but high & very sensitive, greatly reward the gentle, sincere touch.

"I did a lot in Frisco," I admit. "And all of us have been building up, practicing, doing our art as we can while tripping. We're a family. It's time we went together."

Cohn looks happy. I think Sue made him a secret visit last night. "You all don't know how much acid David can do. I don't know if he ever stops tripping anymore."

I take out the acid & a pair of small sewing scissors with maroon handles. Each of us will take enough to sustain tripping from this morning into tomorrow. It's true we've been building up but what noone really understands is that I'm nearly doubling the last amount any of us took.

I think about Suzann. Her body was better than acid. Her heart meant more to me than Godd.



But she taught me a lot about LSD nonetheless. "Learn to steer, Davey," she'd insist as I rested in her bed watching planets & colors form in the dust motes & dissolve. "You'll go farther. It will be better."

I hold out my arms. Suzann never refused me. "But you'll enjoy me more if you know what I'm feeling, too," she'd explain.

One time she painted me, from head to toe. My back she painted a dotty rust color—"because you work it hard but never appreciate it." My genitals she painted pink & ruby—"because they're happiest inside of me." My chest she covered with lines from my poems & others' poems—"because you are a bard & bards' songs come from their chest." My legs she twined with pictures of her face & body—"so you can't forget me or leave me." My feet she decorated with clouds & stars—"because you soul wants to float freely in the night." On my face she carefully wrote her true feelings for me—but wouldn't let me near a mirror—why didn't I find one anyway?

"David?"

"Suzann."

"Sue, David. Short for Susan."

"Sorry."

"He was with his one true love again," Rachel-Nicole smiles. "Back in San Francisco." I have told them all very little.

"Be here with us." Hartlee said suddenly. "We need you." The others agree & our circle tightens.

"Actually, it's Suzann who taught me a lot of what I've taught you," I confess. Feeling good about it, I add, "She taught me to steer."

I pass around the acid & Sue hands out tall glasses of orange juice. Seeing Rachel-Nicole shed her boxer shorts, I decide to do the same, & undress.

So we're all nude & lying side by side before the big window. We're holding hands. Hartlee, Sue, me, Cohn, Rachel. All of us around 20 years old but veterans, we feel, of sex, drugs & Art.

None of us will be old enough in November to vote. It wouldn't matter anyway. King & the Kennedys are dead. The peace movement is dead. The civil rights movement is dead. Student uprisings are brought down with advanced firepower & whips & chains. All over. France. Eastern Europe.

The Yippies want everyone to go to Chicago in August for a "Festival of Life" to oppose the Democratic National Convention. Noone I know is going. Most kids I know have been beaten up at least once by the cops.

But I wonder if the problem isn't deeper. Last night, as I walked on Canal Street thinking about today's plan, I realized that the establishment meant to win one way or another. Power doesn't give up easily. Power has to be crushed by greater power & the kids haven't got it. They're not warriors, not really.

So they'll win eventually. The government won't fall like some people think. But some of us will opt out & will be lost to it all.

I sat on the large cement block across from the empty factory & thought all this. I'm not going back. I'm going to unfasten myself, link by link, from everything & never go back.

But you know what? I may be in Chicago next month. Last night I decided to look for Suzann at her school.

I pull Rebecca back & drag her into her manager's office.

"What is it?" she asks.

"I want to talk to you."

Close the door, sit on the couch. Kiss so fiercely the wilder blood readies. But segue into a hug. Just the need for her touch.

"Tell me."

"You've been mad at me about how things are going."

"I was frustrated. I don't want you to do something you won't like later."

"Well, I want you to know that I'm OK. And if I waver, you back me up, and I'll be OK again. That's how I want to do it."

Her look searches through me almost roughly for anything else, but there's nothing.

"Being this close to the writing of my world is harder than anything. Sex was easy," she says shyly.

I hold her chin. She trusts, & waits. "Rebecca, you back me up & everything will be fine."

"Do I, um, kiss you?"

"No!" I almost laugh. "Draw! If the story is slipping from me, draw from that moment & lead it safely on so I can assume it again."

Her face tightens. She looks down. "What if I'm not enough?"

"You'll be fine."

"No, Ray," she is serious & not playing a game. "We should ask Jim Reality. We should have a lot of backup."

I think. I nod. "You tell him. He loves you like you're his third daughter."

She nods. Pauses. Mouth moving, but no words.

"What is it, Victoria?"

She smiles & finds her words. "My Dad? & Franny?"

"That's where it gets hard."

She almost hits me. "Ray, I want him back. I want her back too but I won't make you."

"He's back. She is too."

"In the bandroom?"

I nod solemnly, childly, Beckah-like.

She's confused. "You're undercutting all you've done!"

"I'm trusting myself, Reb. He was right. The Orpheus story parallel fell apart. He convinced me. So I brought them back. They're together, standing in the doorway you made for this moment." I stop suddenly.

"What is it?"

"Rebecca, as much as it's possible, ever more, you've made me happy."

"You make me happy, too."

"I don't know if I can let you go. You're my touchstone to the happy things in my past. And you're helping me to heal my future. You inspire me to be the better person I used to be. Not Art. That too but this is different. You inspire me to want to live my life better, happier, but still my way."

She listens, bathing happily in my words. Softer than spring sunshine, she replies in near a whisper, "Ray, we can stay together. It doesn't have to end. There are options."

We kiss & hug again.

With one who you should share love with, an embrace enhances your very breathing, sweetens yr fluids impossibly, feels like what was missing.

With one you should love, there is a quiet perfect mingling in every moment you share. You give to her the flowers & poems & confessions of devotion that belong to her. She walks, & you thusly move. Every woman you smile at who returns your smile is a handmaiden to your true love, & thus treated preciousy, & accordingly. Even a thousand miles away, you lie in your bed involved with her breathing, listening to her bedsprings move. When you see her at last, your heart is weightless with a rapture beyond love, with a soundness you find again in the universe.

With one you should love, there is a tingling you feel every moment. You give to him the embraces & kisses he has endless appetite for. You want to listen to his voice but you speak instead because his need is almost desperate. He wants you to live entirely within him, be his ocean's monarch & sole resident. You want him to love you, you hope that he will,

but his thoughts don't divide in this way. For him, your voice & your body & your heart & your divinity & your mundanities are undividably one & so loving him with all of you is the only way he can be sure of you, of your love.

I love you, beautiful girl, young & floating still in this world. Each time I hold you, embrace you like my last chance, something bad in me goes away & I am running water with none of the pollution of my many years. You restore me & every night I dream about the last time & the next time.

I belonged to you years ago, in silent, espying ways. I now belong to you obviously. I belong to you in ways you cannot understand. I belong to you & thus await your command.

July 25, 1968
Cornish, New Hampshire
Poetry Notebook & Journal
of David Time

8 a.m. — The acid has taken effect. I am holding us together intuitively. We have already engaged in a group lovemaking that went well. Creamy Sue found Cohn creeping shyly up to her & she took him in & the rest of us gathered around & with our hands & mouths & legs supported them as they went deeper into their union & eventually I took over & led Cohn through the process of letting Sue go as a desired mate. Together we loved Sue, helping each other (making Sue crazy with happiness but that was a wonderful bonus).

I led him inch by inch over her body. "Free her, Cohn, brother," I urged again & again. "Spread her thighs. They're beautiful, aren't they? They shine. They're most perfectly womanly. We'll explore them together" And Sue spread her legs apart & Cohn & I licked & kissed & touched her thighs. Her breath sounded like a steamboat. "Let that thigh go, Cohn. Love it the best you can & let it go. Leave it glistening with your tongue & your touch. Look up! See her face! She's smiling as we love her. She's smiling as you let her go. Now let's trade thighs. Work your way up, Cohn, go right to it, right into her vagina. No, your tongue, she wants your tongue, no this isn't it you'll be here again, this isn't so easy as thighs to let go. Now in. Go ahead! I'll wait. I'll keep busy." I waited for him with my face on her breasts, mouthing & sucking her nipples. "Now Cohn bring her to orgasm. Slowly, go slowly. She's losing you too. She wants your mouth in there as long as possible. Good . . . good . . . she

likes that . . . there . . . fine . . . Sue is a new universe . . . panting hard . . . reinvented . . . now move slowly from her vagina to her other thigh . . . and I'll take the one you left so there will be balance. We need Hartlee & Rachel . . . prepare her mouth & breasts & belly for Cohn being up there . . ."

It was a unifying experience esp when Cohn had let Sue go as a mate. We all fell upon each other like young animals. At one point we were heaped in a naked, wet group, disoriented, starting to peak.

10 am I think

I had us all dress to shift the movement of things. Our group lovemaking nearly became daylong but I explained that we were steering. I had to break out tales of my own past again. For unity, we all wore pairs of boxers & men's splattered shirts from Rachel-Nicole's "collection" (it's a quirk of hers to often take painters as lovers & receive these shirts & shorts as souvenirs). Anyway, covered up now, we sit in our close circle & talk.

"Suzann & I would make love for hours before we would work."

Rachel & Sue shine at me like "I bet you did." Sue apparently has forgiven me.

"But she told me it was for itself & for Art. She said we were drawing out our creative essences, rousing our fluids; 'with lovemaking & acid,' she'd say, 'you have an open door. You're not fooling yourself about what you've been, or what you've become. But you're allowing the future its full due. You're not denying it because of all the old pains you carry around.'

"Suzann taught me how to steer & how to write poetry," I finish, lamely.

Sue smiles at me. "Do you have a poem from then to read to us?"

I nod, shy, embarrassed for no good reason.

The four of them tighten around me like a fallen comrade. They know what I feel is hurt & loss but that I'm trying to take those beloved days & do something good with them now.

So I read the poem I'd brought, hoping that I'd get to read it.

*Silences in this angel's night
 many of them
 joyful crowds on the sand
 blowing back the water
 tricking the moonshine
 lonely silences, estranged
 from this virtuous world of theirs*

*wanting human song
 needing human rainbows of pain*

*Further into this angel's night
 bright bonfires of song
 on many city rooves
 on the bridges over the Bay
 Songs thick as shared skin
 Songs dancing on lost guitars
 but some songs just mutter
 unsheath their woes when asked*

*wanting human failings
 needing repeated human mistakes*

*The deepest hour in this angel's night
 humans writhe, with love or just urge
 humans hold guns & holy books
 humans crash to understand trees
 but some humans mistake silence for emptiness
 some humans think the songs are not for them
 some humans drown in this deepest hour
 because they agreed this is hell, & acted as they should*

*there is no bridge to the nearest star
 there is only faith:
 a little faith, & it's a long journey.*

After I read this it's easy to coax them all to their work. I explain that each of us can work at our usual pace in our usual manners—except, of course, not being alone & tripping will make things different. But each of us must stop & go to another or to as many as he wants to observe &

bring back ideas that will draw our work together, bind each into something greater.

“Use your intuition. Take your time. This acid will tell you everything you need to know if you listen to it.”

It begins tentatively. None of them really wanted to dress—now separating us into individuals again is pushing them pretty far.

I start again. “We don’t need to be far away. We can stand side by side if you want. But this will work if we trust that we’re all here for each other, we’re all good artists, it will be fine.”

Then I realize that they’ve become dependent on me. I’ve been leading all morning & the acid has impressed this on their templates.

What to do . . . I decide to try a variation on something Suzann did for me one time, early on, when I clung to her breasts . . .

She set up her canvas right next to our bed, on an easel tall enough for her to use comfortably. She turned her back toward it to work, but allowed me to lay upon her, kissing her breasts. Then she instructed me to move my head between her thighs & she told me how to steer her orgasm.

There was more to it than steering I learned that day. I was bringing her close & backing away as she commanded. Pissed off, she grabbed my hair & pulled me up.

“What are you doing, Davey?”

“I’m listening to you!”

“Why?”

““Why?””

“Don’t you like being between my thighs?”

“I love it, Suzann!”

“And you know what to do?”

“Yes!”

“Then do it!”

“I don’t understand. I should ignore you?”

“I’ll stop talking once you find your way, David!”

“What?”

“Learn to steer until you don’t have to anymore. Until life is your breathing. Do you understand?”

I did. I really did. I returned to her divine pussy & I didn’t need instructions anymore. I saw her painting later. She’d gone with black & red oils exclusively, a dense abstract design with same savage splashes here & there—and only stopped when I leaped on her, all her paint things flying away, & I took her six or seven times that afternoon . . .

How to do that kind of thing? They wait, getting scared, acid responding to every moment's every mote, molecule—

I undress again & say I am going to write a poem. I ask them to protect me. They understand.

They form a tight box around me & say nothing.

I write from the hope & the possible desperateness of the situation.

Hand in hand, Rebecca & I at last enter the bandroom. I haven't known what to expect. It keeps changing really.

Rich is somewhere, out of sight. Rebecca says she's going to find him right now & that's that.

I go over to the little table beneath the front window where sits the beautiful young blondehaired purpleeyed long-sought Franny Emily Renée Salinger.

We hug tightly & her soft contours remind me of every moment of our former lovemaking.

"Franny."

"Raymon'."

"Are you mad at me?"

"No."

"I've wanted you back here for so long, believe me."

"Me too. But do I belong here anymore?"

"I want you to."

"But you won't do it unless it's right."

"Yes."

"You're Rebecca's boyfrien' now."

"Yes."

"She's happy."

"Yes. But I'm happier. You know."

Franny moves her chair next to mine so I can hold her. "Aren't you going to ask me?"

"What?"

"If I want to come back?"

"Maybe I don't want to ask that."

"Well, I do."

"Franny, what are we facing here?"

"It's him. Can he ever handle a real relationship? Should he?"

"He's trying, Franny."

"I know. An' you're helpin' him."

Rich & Reb are walking twined toward us. We all sit down.

I look at Reb. Faltering. She nods.

She draws & we wait.

Her drawing is dark & obscure. The bandroom in it is filled & Noisy Children are performing. Jim Reality is on stage with them.

“Dad, before you can love Franny you have to do this. You have to work all the time on making your peace with this. It’s where you start. Franny will know you & trust you by where you start & go with this & then what you say to her after. I know it seems simple but—”

“Yes” he nods.

Noisy Children, live at Luna T’s Cafe, July Saturday night, the joint packed & crazy.

Americus speaks into the microphone. “One of the bands we love is The Who.”

Eruption of cheers & shouts of song titles.

“Pete Townshend dreamed of a better world through musical union of souls. He still does. But back in 1971 he tried to make it happen. He conceived ‘Lifehouse,’ a live Who show that would go on for months & through music & electronics eventually link all the souls present to produce the One Note, the one that brought the world into being, the one that will signal its annihilation.”

Quieter cheers, listening. Something happening here.

“This moment is inside of something larger which is inside of something larger still. All is not as it seems. You’ll know these songs but not from the ‘Lifehouse’ project. Townshend dreamed of a futuristic world where rock was outlawed, the earth was dead but the few who remained tried one last time to break humanity through **DIVINE MANIFESTATION.**”

Americus waits while the clapping thins. “We have to try again.” More cheers & the band rips into music.

*Out here in the fields
I fight for my meals
I get my back into my living
I don’t need to fight
to prove I’m right
I don’t need to be forgiven*

Ronnie Pascale, lead guitarist, sends a lyrical explosion of notes ripping through the joint.



*Teenage wasteland
only teenage wasteland
teenage wasteland oh yah
only teenage wasteland
they're all wasted!*

Americus sings but splits sings but disintegrates sings on but in some vital way is very very gone

He & Franny are walking through the swamplands of her Georgia hometown. They are holding hands, shyly.

"I don't know any other boys who write poetry," she says, a pretty 16-year-old, hardly touched for all her tomboy upbringing.

Americus is 17, when his days were silent & mourning. There was no Franny for him then. So this is how hard it will be.

"Franny" he says "Yes?" she interrupts, a sureness in her eye, a confidence in her soft voice.

"It's hard for me to show myself to others."

"Why?"

"My brother died when he was five. I was seven. It was from a hayloft. He fell, I mean. But we were tussling. I don't really know what happened."

He's sitting on the stony ground, crying. She's holding him gently; not grownup sexually, he realizes. She loves him but she is young & going slowly.

"Is that what it's about?" he asks.

"What?" she says, nearly crying herself.

"Going slowly? Unwrapping love a little at a time?"

She doesn't understand but won't mind if he kisses her.

Her kiss is sweet but unpracticed. She keeps her mouth closed, and her eyes, too.

Enjoying this, he raises his head up. "Would you, um, go steady with me?"

Her purple eyes brighten, deepen. "You wan' to?"

"I like you, Franny. You're kind to me. You want me to be gentle to you, too."

"Yes. But you are. You're a nice boy."

They hug each other like two cubs, out of warmth & familiarity.

"I'm remembering," he whispers to her. "I'd forgotten this. I was

hidden then. I was mourning. This didn't happen when it should."

"Heal the future, Rich," she whispers back softly.

The band is shaking the Godd-pinked walls as Americus, Pascale & Reality trade leads.

Let's see action

let's see people

let's see freedom

let's see who cares

The room's walls shoot colourous flower petals at the dancing crowd there is sense that this is it tonight Live at Luna T's Cafe something good's been allowed to return to this Earth tonight here none of us thought it would we knew in fact it wouldn't but here it is damnit here it is——

there isn't anything else, you must understand there is only the here of now, the now before our eyes, the streets that distract with the delusion of options, the many eyes that lie each time they argue for differentiation

heal the future, that's all there is do it now! why are you waiting! the noisy slosh of food in your mouth the TV dope you take by the hour

the foolish shiny icons in ruined old buildings ruined by lies & ideologies by promises to give what each soul already calls its own

you're unhappy but you have a plan you're hopeful but it costs a lot of money you say your prayers but what kind of Godd would have bound you thusly in the first place?

You want to love a man or a woman & you seek the options.

You listen to pop songs for instructions your heart doesn't need

You ejaculate, alone in your room, & do not hear the universe's tender sigh & quiet crying

You look about the chambers of your soul & you are embarrassed because you imagine the less maudlin less purple passions of others

You read your personal history & cringe because of all you've done, the pathetic ambitions, the years lost in uselessly trying to scratch your left ass cheek with your right eyebrow

Mother is your Satan & Father seeded her with you to punish everyone. Family crowds your heart with every embarrassment you are trying to efface

There is Nature but you don't have time There is Godd but that's just more work Heal the Future? Easier to hack at your immutable past.

If only you were young again, & that girl liked you back & in that bedroom full of pink bunnies & Duran Duran posters with the lights dimmed to low pink, she let you trembly lie close to her & teach her & you what it means for male fingers to creep under elastic bands into damp golden female skin, she learns & you learn the fullness of virginity in these last moments & each of you doubts but something is shaking between you now & she will allow you because that is what popsongs & girls magazines have instructed her to do “on that special night when everything is perfect” & you will undress & fumble for your condom because the prick that hangs half-roused from your torso has marched fascist armies of blood & fire into your brain has taken over & will not release you ever until you have taken her cherry & left her with your rhythmic hardness shaking through her forever—if only that girl had liked you back then

Come on, isn't it too late?

Heal the Future? What kind of New Age Psychic Hotline Non Western mumbo jumbo is that?

Heal the Future?

No! Hack the Past!

Hack it! Just like those young computer punks who delight in devising ways to break into computer systems to fuck them up!

Yes! Hack the Past!

You can do it!

Rewrite what you remember. Rewire how you feel. Regret & Regret & Regret & Remorse & Remorse—

feels good

almost sexual

the fine sunny young ass composed of all your mistakes

that fine pair of high co-ed tits that comprise the decisions you made out of fear

that split wet beaver of every act of maturity & independence you took too long to perform

it's over the universe is dead your masturbation is now more to help you get to sleep than any sly carnal intention on the kosmos

give up now, capitulating motherfucker—the shaking electric lamp by your bedside has a long cord to hang from your ceiling

July 25, 1968
 Cornish, New Hampshire
 Poetry Notebook & Journal
 of David Time

noon, maybe this will be rough, writing this, I can only do poems now right
 but we're here we're here finally & it's beautiful Suzann you were right oh
 god Suzann, my Suzann, god my Suzann you were so right

poem, high

*some tree hung into the coldness
 some tree was wild with red ice
 roots tail wrapped around an arm
 the devastating arm that confirms our souls
 the arm we grab for our whole lives
 hung into the true night, beyond air*

*the true night, my several loves
 every chord is rocking us levitating us*

*i came to warm the tree with my hand
 i came to spend & share my blood
 i'd travelled in hard smoke, swift integrity
 i felt the tree disintegrating & followed*

*we were rings around a trunk of smoke
 heating, renewing, interior noise shining
 now no longer smoke, now passing sentiment*

*the true night, my ring of pink virgins
 every chord is dancing, giving us more*

*now we are books of burning songs
 now we are spread for the night's billowing heaviness
 now we are an unformed page in tree's heart
 now we are a blankness stiff with water & light*

now, we, a length by width of undiffused love

Rachel-Nicole & I made love seated, her facing me sitting on my lap, and as I lowered my head to inhale her breasts, as our genitals locked into a rhythmic grind, her hands prodded & crushed into her sculpture clay on a table behind me it was so like that time with Suzann I remembered & used my old maneuvers pushing Rachel down so my prick was grinding harder against her clitoris & she wetly inhaled in her ecstasy I kept grinding til she came, & again, and she was crying & finally I pulled out, sore & empty & she attacked her sculpture to fuse her clay with her carnal exhaustion

Hartlee didn't touch his electronic equipment for hours, just played beautiful sounds on his acoustic guitar, watching everyone, watching within himself too.

Then Creamy Sue went over to him, covered in various colored oils, put down a huge canvas, already stretched, & laid down upon it, ass high & spread for him.

A bit shy but liking the idea, Hartlee set up a microphone near her mouth and as he thrust deep inside her round ass, she crushed paint into her canvas & groaned carnally into the microphone.

I don't know how these words are coming out but I'm happy we're breaking through! We're breaking through!

Noisy Children kept playing & the crowd kept getting crazier but at some pt I found Rebecca & practically carried her to her office.

She was smiling. She had been dancing for hours—I'd gotten tired but told her to keep going. I told her she should meet Amante.

Now we sit together.

"Yes, Ray?"

"What's happening here?"

"We're breaking through! It's what I hoped. Franny hasn't gone away. She's staying near me & sometimes we dance near the stage to tease my Dad & Cecile. Especially Cecile."

"No. The membrane isn't broken. It seems it but it's not."

She's disappointed but certain of me so she waits.

"I don't know!" I say. "I don't know! I've tried everything. For years! What crazy shit haven't I written? What drugs haven't I tried? I'd fuck anyone to break through that membrane. But I can't."

"Should I draw?" She is trying not to be scared.

"I don't know."

Americus now shows up, sits with us. Rebecca stands up to leave but

the two of us pull her back down.

“We need you here”

“Franny sez she doesn’t know what to do” Rich sez.

“You can have her,” I sigh. “Forever. Get married tonight. You’ll be the obscure, wonderful 20th century Orpheus & Eurydice but you’ll stay together just like the pre-Greek myth tells.”

“Are you giving up, Soulard?”

“If it’s not sex, or music, not drugs or peace & love, what is it? How do we get there? How do we do it?”

I make them go away. This is now just me, July 26, 1998, in my own world, an anonymous donutshop in Connecticut, sunny afternoon. Clapton on the radio, wanting to change the world.

*If I could change the world
I would be the sunlight in yr universe
You would think my love was real & something good
If I could change the world
If I could change the world*

It’s only Art. It’s only a story. A worn black pen. Some hundreds of black’d sheets—

Help me lord
Help me no-lord
Do it Soulard!
Somehow!
Work it on out!
Summon them all
The godds of your known

*I say the true artist-seer
that heavenly fool who can
& does produce beauty is
mainly dazzled to death by
his own scruples the blinding
shapes & colors of his
sacred human conscience
—Salinger*

*Beauty crowd me til I die
 Beauty mercy have on me
 But if I expire today
 Let it be in sight of thee*

—Dickinson

*And if the earthly no longer knows
 your name,
 whisper to the silent earth: I'm flow-
 ing.*

To the flashing water say: I am.

—Rilke

Listen! Even the radio tries to tell

*The finer things keep shining through
 The way my soul gets lost in you
 The finer things I feel in me
 The golden dance life could be*

—Steve Winwood

Listen! It's everywhere! There's confession & announcement of
 God's presence everywhere! You can't not be of it!

Every strand in your old shirt! Every stain on your old chair. Those
 lousy remorseful pressing noises that wake you in the deep darkness.

Rise! Rise! You canna sink!

High Enough? Never!

Heal the Future
 Heal the Future

OK. Calm down.

Take a breath. Do it for a few minutes . . .

Cornish, New Hampshire
Poetry Notebook & Journal
of David Time

the time doesn't matter anymore & I don't think I know what we're all
about I think we've pushed through but I don't think this means what I
thought it would

there's empty quiet on the other side
the stars are balls of gas with no illusional shimmer

"Time! This is Soulard! In 1998!"

That's what the voice said to me. It wasn't the others I knew that.

"Time! We're both at the membrane, 30 years apart but to the day!"

I still said nothing. I tore a piece of paper from my notebook to test
this creature's reality tho.

"What did you find?" I write.

"Nothing!" He screams in my ear.

"Use my paper" I write.

"There's nothing no opening ecstasy onto the next level! No
language!"

"Me too" I write. "But my friends don't know."

"Mine do" he writes. "They're very hurt."

"Why are you contacting me?"

"Time! We have to restore it! We have to agree! We have to support
each other"

"OK" I write.

"Take your friends outside. Tell them you're proud of them but be
obscure. Love them enough to lie. I'll give my friends what they want. I'll
find a way."

"OK" I write. "Will this do it?"

"I hope" he writes & there is no more from him.

This is Soulard & I've been lost in foolish doings

This is Soulard, author & creator of this maybe-soon-ending series &
these last scenes find me well enough & fully intentional.

Richard James Americus & Frances Emily Renée Salinger were married
today, July 26, 1998, somewhere in the darkest hours.

*Lay down beside me
Love ain't for keeping*

Jim Reality & Noisy Children play their Who wedding song.

*Lay down my garden
Love ain't for keeping*

The party goes til dawn tho I've taken Rebecca away from it.

She & I are in Cement Park

"I wish we could marry"

"You're old enough—in some states"

"Very funny, Ray"

Cement & street lights. The greenskinned Puritans. My good girl
artist lover.

"Last fall I was reading Kafka's *The Castle* when I thought wouldn't it
be something to write a story that intentionally fails?" I explain to her.

"Is this a failure?"

"I don't know"

"I still love you"

"I love you too"

David & his tripping friends tripping deep into the Cornish forest.
David soon off to find Suzann.

"We did it!" they sing.

"We did it!"

What does it matter, David, that there are things we can never tell
our loved ones? Things that would crush them?

Life is long.

Love is vulnerable.

Save those you can.

Save yourself.

Heal the Future.

Heal Your Future.

Raise a glass, here & now, to Mr. Richard James Americus & his

beautiful Southern bride.

Raise a toast to this failed story, how hard it did try.

Raise a toast to your future, your very own, how good it looks from here. Can you see it too?

7-26-98
West Hartford, CT



JIM BURKE, III



THE STATE OF THE WORLD, PART TWO

Editor's Note: The following is the twenty-first in an ongoing series derived from the correspondence between Jim Burke III and myself, begun in 1992, and in the spirit of the more enthused letter-writing tradition of yesteryear.

July 30, 2003
[West Hartford, CT]

Dear Ray,

I've waited long enough to write this essay not because of any lack of content or ideas, but because the world's political situation shifts abruptly from day to day. In order to let the reader know for future reference, the United States is being drawn into a Vietnamesque quagmire in Iraq, unemployment in this country is at a fifteen-to-twenty year high (the actual amount varies sharply from government reports because of their reporting methods—if you run out of unemployment benefits you are no longer counted as unemployed!) and the President of this country is engaged in covert operations with Saudi Arabia. It is also becoming more evident that "President" Bush deliberately and maliciously led this country into a war based on information that was falsified deliberately by this country's national security agencies. Indeed we are at war and the economy sucks—must be a Republican in office again. Also apparent is what the war is really about: OIL and nothing else. The farce of fighting a "war on terror" by using physical and mental torture of "illegal combatants" held prisoner is a prime example of how hypocritical this administration acts. Then came Operation Enduring Freedom that mutated into Operation Enduring-Attacks-on-a-Daily-Basis. OIL will support our technology which is why the New York Stock Exchange and NASDAQ continue to make money for the oil merchants and investors—war at any cost—human or otherwise.

The “State of the World, Part One” [*Cenacle* 46, June 2001] advocated a redistribution of the wealth and a close monitoring of technological advances to counteract the consumption paradigm our species lives with. I have proposed that technology is an entity exponential unto itself—that is, it needs an increasing exponential amount of itself to perpetuate our present state of existence. The operative concept now more than ever is consumerism. We must undergo a paradigm shift with a greater sense of urgency than ever before.

I started working in the social services field many years ago. There was always the question of what to call the population you worked with. For instance, can you call a client mentally ill, or cognitively deficient, or retarded, or mentally handicapped, etc? Political correctness abounds and, several years ago, the blanket client population in social services, regardless of need, were referred to as “consumers.” This satisfied those looking for political correctness by using the most generic term possible—*we all consume*. Our whole culture is based on consuming at a rate that is out of balance with what Mother Nature has to offer: an alternative to increasing technology through solar power and other ecologically-based initiatives. The world also consumes at an alarming rate, for the most part ignoring the limited resources of our planet.

Our planet is made of finite mass *a priori*. This is a philosophical certainty as seen from pictures of the earth taken from outer space. The earth and its atmosphere hang in the middle of the cosmos, suspended by invisible gravitational forces. As we consume more and more of the finite material we call Earth, it appears that Mother Nature will leave global warming and a depleted ozone layer as presents in return. The amount of waste is too staggering to estimate, but recycling must be implemented to the fullest degree possible. We as a species are encouraged to consume without regard to consequence from early childhood. Our so-called leaders in Congress are more concerned with passing these problems on to the next generation and our children.

Technology seems to be the ulterior goal of the world’s political economy. In order to find a solution to this greedy malaise, we must first examine how and when technology got to its present state. I submit the following two hypotheses:

1. Technology was always perpetual unto itself and it was only the proverbial “question of time” before it would outstrip the natural

resources provided by this planet. After the Sumerians who invented the wheel, the die was cast. I will also point out that more progress in technology has been made in the last fifty years than the accumulation of the previous 5,000 years.

2. Our present technology was influenced by some extraterrestrial event, or perhaps even direct contact. Since the Roswell incident, our whole communications infrastructure has been altered. We went from Marconi radio to the Internet pretty damn fast! The possibility of alien contact is actually a moot point because any civilization capable of interstellar travel would be very advanced. This would scare the beans out of many people and our "leaders" would never permit this. The *gradual* infusion of an alien technology from studying the crash at Area 51 seems much more plausible.

In either case, the resulting technological advances that aid an increase in consumption have to be brought under control. This would have the (intended) effect of reducing corporate earnings and combating greed on a planetary scale. The State of the World would be a less consuming one. We would only consume as needed. This would surely eat into corporate profits and the political economic world would be standing on its head. However, the truth is. It remains indestructible. The general population has become content to survive, some with greater ease than others. They have become unaware of the mass sin against nature, the numbness becomes fundamental enhanced by technology. Our government loves to manipulate sheeple. Real sheeple are part of their plan: find any excuse to go to war for technology and oil, justify same to the sheeple, instill fear of opposition in the sheeple by attempting to suppress their rights as guaranteed in our constitution, and finally create more sheeple as technology perpetuates itself and puts us more at ease.

There is an alternative way of thinking that is becoming more noticeable among a relatively small segment of this country's population. The term counterculture would be apropos except that it has been underground for the last twenty-five years. Since the late 1970s the concept of peace, love, and save the environment was forced underground by elected government leaders: A lot of this country's population embraced the Reagan era initially because the 1960s and 1970s were too much for them. Too many things occurred too fast during that time period. The Reagan-Bush I years were filled with

boredom created and alleviated by the “new” technology. Cable television expanded so that over ninety-five percent of the population had access to it. The Clinton era ushered in the super-highway of communications through digital transmissions and fiber optics. The present administration has used these advances to promote media manipulation of the sheeple. Only now after hibernating for more than two decades can the awakenings of that counterculture be detected.

The word counterculture is also out of time at this point. The original movement was brought on by the Vietnam War and a segment of our population that could not tolerate it. This segment is now older, and much wiser. There is no exposé waiting to happen with regard to psychedelics. The Burning Man festival takes place on an annual basis and is barely given any media attention, although tens of thousands of people attend. The Green Party appears to be working to support a Democratic Party candidate, ultimately, to defeat Bush II. The “counterculture” is actually *the* culture that is quietly and effectively making itself known. The technology that our government is presently trying to manipulate to cover up its war crimes is actually assisting those of us in our quest to expose them.

The time for us to become more visible is approaching. It is imperative that the current technology be monitored through legal methods to defeat Bush in the 2004 elections. The ultimate make-up of the Supreme Court will be determined by the results of that election. The future of this planet is reaching a watershed and a paradigm shift away from consumerism toward conservation is essential. The truth will then be revealed, unmasked from the façade that the present administration has covered it with. This will lead at some future time, I hope, when the ultimate truth will be put forth: We all *do* become stars when we die!



RAYMOND SOULARD, JR.



6 X 36 NOCTURNES

~sixth series~

*"The way things work
is that eventually
something catches."
—Jorie Graham, 1996*

[continued]

xiii. Calling

And where do these answers come from?

The ring of pointing fingers pressing attention
to a wrecked, twitching harlequin, calling it
news, wisdom, instruction, love. Squads of
preachers & merchants gird the king, frowning, pointing.

A few disbelieve at cost of ease or blood.

A few carry pipes & herbs, pamphlets of kisses
& comical scribblings, feathers from burnt
forests & bracelets from struck tribes.

Where, I say, do your answers come from?

Does the elusive crone with three green twigs
& three quiet words know less? Will a
tavern's comforts taint the last juice from
your dream's moans & urges? How deeply must
the king's ranks & rants chase to corner &
pluck the last of your sex, the last
of your savage?

The ragged few minister to needs impolite,
 to the fierce twitchings of the mind, to the
 wordless growling down below. Three abed
 lick thighs & hum. A dozen more drum
 in a field lit only by full moon & blaze.

Maybe there are few, maybe there
 are more. They say the end hurries
 toward us with a rage & glow. I say
 not a single one of us knows.

I can only wield my power tonight by
 letting it sing me true. I can only shamble
 on doorless to fingers, feathers, breeze, &
 verbs. I can only say in every way:
 let's save the world. It's easy. I can only
 agree that both mocking & reverence belong
 to every calling. Yours, yours, & mine own.

xiv. Frenzy (for Lisa Marie)

She dances nude in the highest moonlight,
 cries, sings, summons. Love is to her blooms
 upon a hill. Your war cannot fragment her,
 cannot dissuade her bliss. What rises
 round her has always risen, on such nights,
 round such frenzies of liberation. Watch.

Mount her lace with your fear & with your
 arrogance. You take little. Go again with
 another. You take less. Try a third, one
 who mistaken adores you. Nothing. You take
 nothing. Bullets kill. Blossoms wound. What
 blood would you raise tonight could you truly choose?

The king yowls with power. He barks
 the preacher's false language of the dead,
 he gestures to empty spaces, calls
 darkness a squirming danger, ranks
 mystery with the foul & the foreign. The king
 is noone. Say it again.

Another locked gate, explained obscurely by
 polity or principle. Walk further along,
 step through the ragged response of
 shadows & laughter. Step through. Honor
 thyself, honor all. The king yowls with power.
 Some respond. Shadows. Talking. Study. Remembrance.

Believe in everything still for no damned
 good reason. Dare sing. Dare grieve. Dare
 live. Let no other do your fighting or
 your bleeding. Release to your curiosity,
 to the fangs of your want. Believe with
 arrogance. Wake up. Believe with humility.

Watch her dance, watch her dream,
 watch the universe watching her, watch
 the universe watching you. Join her
 soon. Join us, here, upon this hill &
 below. Everywhere around you. Your war
 cannot dissuade us. Cannot touch our bliss.

xv. Perfection (for Lisa Marie)

Serve the muse, with fiery branch &
 roaring texts, with a sparkle of blurring fingers,
 with a faith rooted in wind & starlight,
 with the power of healthy, accelerating
 memory, with the wiggle & flair of hearts
 divinely twined. Serve with knapsack, boots, &

a long spray of hard-working days. Serve with
 hustle, dream, frenzy. Serve her in secret &
 in thrash. More colors. Wilder music. The beginning
 of a new freedom. Regard thine steady
 shoulders, few tools of experience & survival,
 basket of scars, bells, burs, fists, dried leaves:

The cloud of birds on eves of perfection.
 The raw lash of beauty against pressing hides
 of control.
 The warmth, delight, music of soup as a
 sickness bites & wanes.
 The alley of poor ones sliding through visions
 by afternoons & midnights.
 Restrained, hurried by a thread beneath awareness,
 crisscrossing every star & seed.

Perfection: four fingers & a bloody stump.
 Moldy volumes of myths, old news
 of wastrels & kings, ancient cities
 smouldering beneath the seas, countless
 languages of warning burble dying near
 the tracks of tanks, clean flags, sodden
 polity rallying festivals of forgetfulness.

Perfection: defeat, assault, a grimy
 fist raises a stolen vessel, desert lips
 drink a coveted wine. Hurry: the mystery
 ever evolves & eludes. Hurry: pick
 a king, align with a spirit, mend tonight
 & ready for travel. Hurry. Everything is moving.

Serve the muse, her gentle fingers,
 fecund soul, constant dance. Her
 new fire, its purpose, its doorway.

 Serve her without following, little
 slippage, no wane. Serve the muse,
 & what she serves. A task bound in light.

Beauty & power. Oak leaves among torchlight.

xvi. Broken

Wage Beauty. Open thine hands to the
 burn & cool of mystery, to the fear in knowing
 what trees worship, what holiness does not
 yield before calendar or hoard. Gather your
 gurus & burn them. Can you? Wage Beauty,
 a first time, a next time. A flaring, falling

way of life. To tumble, to elude, to seek
 a pipe's understanding & then the need
 to walk away. To grant the king his crown but
 deny him all else. A life watching broken
 souls lean against each other, upon the
 billions. Call it history, or resist.

Wage Beauty. A signal between muse &
 pen, a crackle, lamps, books, the motions
 of a train car tonight as I try to remember
 everything. What remains a nameless bite,
 a fugue of moments & shadows & sheaves of
 notes. Clocks on unknown wrists. Hurry. Regret.

To no more understand tonight's trembling knee
 than the thousand nights of coffee cups
 & chess grudges. Forever someone from somewhere
 & never otherwise. I camped by another's
 starlight. Someone chose to let me be, see
 what might come of it all.

Wage Beauty. The clenched prayer on
 tonight's train, the sweet juice among
 crowds & young. Yes: I sang here
 many nights. Yes: it mattered. Yes:
 my going is something's mourning. *Something*
will remember.

Wage Beauty. Wage Art. Find her brilliant
 face, at last, & wage the rest. Every
 path now toward what she is becoming,
 toward what a life's true love must be.
 Spectacle, hint. Glory, drool. Unbrushed streaks
 across a dusky wall. A wild of furred & winged
 stories. The summons greater than years before.

xvii. Vigil (for Lisa Marie)

A night of restless hands, hurry, shake, crimson
 music, ravenous, bowl of berries, vessels of thirst,
 hurry, shake, who moves, hustles, & feeds among
 us, what thrums, what smokes, restless hands,
 tonight, wonder beyond words, confessions
 told with crimson music, hurry, shake--

Spirits enflamed with flesh, yes, & what
do we do now? Ask the trees. Ask the stars.
Ask the preacher. Ask the king. Or tend
the seed within, call it faith. Tend it
among nightmare, among slippage. Tend it:
she is watching now. Tend it: something matters.

Crimson music, shape it, call it first
song to her. Crimson music how it shines
now, how it resembles her. Crimson music,
not a belief but a twinkle. A movement
where before there was none. Words beyond
wonder but now not quite so. Who moves,

hustles, & feeds among us? Who? And what
then? Who shares in vessels of thirst?
Who offers? Who receives? I wish her
to sing to me, sing to me, sing to me,
toss me sweets, bed me down in fur & riddles,
clothe us both in oak leaves. Faith in shadows

& in sunrise. Faith the world, though askew,
for now remains. Faith in berries, faith in
thirst. Who redeems? Who remains?

xviii. Protection (for Lisa Marie)

Prayer

Fire burst open by a thrum of fingers, knot of melodies,
frenzy of nocturnes, clot of aches, snap & echo of wings,
a shine within, unloosed, heavens below! forest beyond!

Ask not the preacher when the muse teaches in hue.
Seek not the king when the herd is sniffing truth.
Grove for the music in your rain & your woe. Stretch.

A song, now a scent, now a beam, now a hand,
now a bowl of soup, now a small treasure, now a toy,
now what gathers, now what jingles. Now what laughs,

& what hustles, what crackles twice, & is gone.

Flare & chase, rubber smoking, time askew,
time a question, time a distraction, the hurry forthly,
random governance, oak & pine, lure & shame,

bricks build cities, men for mortar,
kings hoard lushness & leisure,
mark green things with numbers,

trees & flowers wage the sun's crusades—
weeds & shadows dance the moon's—

language too spills from the fire—

let carom by the hurry forthly—
its blight of horns & armaments—
its tomes of cajole & denial—
its banners of flame which do not smoulder—

let the shine within mock what presents
the stars as its humble raiments

let the shine within laugh & spill the cream,
give it a sweet, touch its fresh petals.

* * *

All is Suffering

All is suffering, so one suffers. Suffers til, perhaps,
 one objects. A voice, soft as fur, sings of rain.
 One suffers, yes. Til one objects, holds a kindness
 within a fist, opens, tis a story, a lesson:
 The trees were ragged, the crowd was poor,
 the sun was an iced blur in the sky, but the pipe
 went round again & again. An old man sang, of rain.
 Two women danced. No hurry among empty
 pockets. "All is suffering" the old man sang
 but nobody believed him. The fire, the blankets,
 a soup of salt & bones. The babies dreamed &
 watched. A few wept. It happens. All is
 suffering. Yes. So one suffers. We suffer. Yes.

* * *

Emergence

She kisses leaves & tree trunks, writhes smiling
 beneath the brightest moon, touches my picture,
 wonders about freedom. A spirit licks her face
 with wind, the night softly flaps with music &
 silk, & the trees trace watchful spells along her
 path. The day has growled & gone with twilight,
 the hurry forthly opened wide in smoke & dust.

I bear her high in my ink & heart.
 She bears me in ways I can hardly even know.

Sometimes there are known devils among
 bloodbound faces. Meals served with water
 & mocking. Filaments of hope dimmed with a
 gnarled testament—

Then a hand flicks & a candle gestures.
 The chamber's walls curl with crimson incense.
 A desire stays, many, beneath & beyond
 the struggle. Stays. Insists.

She thinks of clean water, some future night
beneath stars, a lullaby she will create with another.

She taps me with her beauty, imbibes my
power, feeds me with berries & quiet singing.

Something buried snaps her silver friend—
After a thought, & a beat, her golden one emerges—
The moonlight has followed into her chamber—
her shoulders & hands & belly glow—

She chants while I dream, while snow falls
on my neighbor pines, throws her arms &
words far to protect me, shroud me til she shares
my bed. A ceremony of cleansing oils,
spills of moonlight, dreams of travel, hunger for home.
She dances again, & drinks more elixir—

She emerges, nearing me, little fear, little hurrying—
What's between us beginning to leaf, soon to bloom,
some day to seed, some day to riot.

* * *

Protection [i]

In a coffeehouse two couples sit close
amidst blue shadows & crimson incense.
The men are dressed simply, as men usually
are, ready for summons or evacuation.
The women shine, as women do, for perhaps
tonight will end softly, rhythmic linger
among lips & lace. I've sat years here, lone
& aching, my hopes growing faker & more foolish.

Tonight I sit with the new promise embodied
 in a fragrant lock of hair & a merry photograph.
 Tonight I know a woman's promise, & bear
 thoughts of her love on its days of shell &
 those of stone. She takes my hands into
 her heart, into her dreams, every night,
 every night. I lie nestled among the scarves
 & silks of her desires, their laughter, their heat.

The coffeehouse yields to the cool of
 the creamy-rendered moon, & a night
 happy for miles of walking. I think of
 my woman, of her voice when it sings
 upon my skin, of her fingers holding closely
 the pen I gave her, of the shine her dark
 hair casts in her mirror as she chants
 a few crafting words about protection & health—

* * *

Protection [ii]

The night hurried by green things, slowed
 by the grey, somewhere percussion, hookahs,
 the loud smells of piss & rivalry, elsewhere
 disease taps large halls, lingers along
 maps & ledgers, & everywhere a dance opening
 outward to constellations & within to
 candlelight newly pooling, blinding out dust,
 a prayer overflows, two mouths touch
 while awaiting, what's grey brief relinquishes,
 what's green tickles madly, overtops, gleeful
 smoke for our gathering, sweets leap us wildly,
 elixirs & music show us how.

We make Art because we have forgotten
 how to tell the truth, because some
 words come out better in pigment or
 flute, because our languages hardly
 yet know how to speak us, because the bite
 of pain yet exists, because our hearts feed from some abyss.

I have been both green thing running
 & grey thing shivering, an artist scrawling
 paths from scents & stars, a muse posing
 rusty & bemused, an abyss urging others in,
 crying others away, a seed nearly golden
 among dew & tracks, a fervent radiation,
 one's warning, another's pledge, a reason,
 an excuse, a yowl, a purr. Tonight I press
 those that honor my pen & would tangle
 me among their coalescing mullings: protect her.
 Tonight I rouse & raise what powers & magicks
 goodly among men to do this. Look where I beckon.

We make Art to prove our intent toward
 what yonder, what within. Because many
 thousand nights' blood bore us we never
 knew where. Gutted deer we passed. Hidden
 violins among butterflies & roses. An afternoon
 spent dozing in talk with a lost friend—

* * *

Protection [iii]

Protection: a cry this morning midst willows &
 surf. Walking into dream spray, a man bears
 the scarves & silks of desire, walks hot, walks cold,
 walks til the path ends. Chooses to return,
 or keep walking, beyond the spray, now, or back
 to the preacher's boo-stories & king's simple songs.

Protection: hidden violins among butterflies & roses. Green things teach growth. Grey things teach huddle. The seed within: is it golden or merely gold's shadow? Protection in the pipe's sharing or behind the bullet? Must all be suffering? say yea or nay.

Protection: when Beauty wages, both flags & nocturnes burn. Green things will always survive, grey things will always pursue.

The king now yowls greater: scriptures' noose is ready. But Beauty rousing will crush history's dour fist. Beauty roars, misshapes, makes anew—

* * *

Mercy

To play one true note & watch you dance,
cyclone, fury, chants of your hands, squeeze
of your eyes, you dance, I play, we
exchange, dream for day, one true note,
& the greed for another, many, countless
musics about your buzz, powers wild

in your brush, & thighs. One true note,
we amplify each other, become visible,
become starshine, become wisdom, become
silence. Become the mist in winter marshes,
an old man's staccato sleep, a birth-warm egg.
Become lights in the raw city, a snapping

wing, a bully shattered. True note played
against the lordly king as now he stands
preacher, an altar, a scripture. True notes
sing of questions, offer warnings, share
blessings. I would burn nocturnes & flags
alike, yea, to watch you dance, cyclone,

fury, would toss all the monsters
 of my art in, see them flounder,
 groan & aloft, true note, one true note,
 one for our love of stone, beg
 another for our love of feather,
 play me, love, play my one true

note, as I play yours, while green things
 laugh & stomp, grey things bluntly ponder,
 what shall we be in yonder days
 when coming words elude, if coming words
 drown? What music purrs in our cupped hands,
 what notes flick light from our fingers?

To play one true note, tonight, with
 the mercy of spring rain & the hunger
 of old pictures. One true note between
 us, wherein we dwell, perhaps one day
 big enough for the world. One true note, it's
 played us all of our lives. One true note &

its hints of better days, pulsing mornings.

* * *

Quickening

He begged me for the lord of his younger
 days, for that fiery sense of two fists
 upholding his strides, a color exactly like
 holiness thick within each root & creature.
 He looked at me with eyes misshapen by
 doubt's blurry stain, & he groaned, & said "Please."

"Had ye a wife once?" "Aye, but more than once.
 A man has many wives. His women. His
 tools. His faith, too, if he cedes it strength enough
 to hurt him. They leave, sometimes together.
 A man empties, like a town or a beach.
 Trains & tides cease their coming. Aye."

He sweats & jingles his tumbler of bourbon.

Eyes my mug of water with a scoff.

"You're walking my path, too. I more than suspect it." Drinks hard. Coughs. Taps for more. "Pour it while yet I live & wheeze.

No poisons sweet as this beneath the ground."

"And hope, old man? Talk I hear of the quickening, clean new days, breaches into the light itself? Kings left boneless & preachers bereft?"

He nods, sips more slowly. "There's the very path. Keep your hands to the oars of this starship! Come along! See! It rises!"

The tavern eases in around us. He's told this story before, & each time a pilgrim in middle life listens, sucks his warning like twas a hungry bride's nipple, & his herd of familiars listen, twine round the old man's pain, urge & aid him in pulling it tighter.

He nods. "Aye. So tis. The wives a man gains & loses. The faiths & gifts & miracles ye receive. Coins of fire! How will ye spend them!" He stands, snaps up what remains of his drink. Suddenly beaten, cracked apart by what I cannot concede, he cries:

"Where is the lord I felt in my mother's lullabies? The lord I saw hued in my bride's cheek? Where is the lord who clung to me with my children's hands? The one promised me by prophets who smoked pipes with me & buried seeds? Where? When will he come to protect me anew?"

* * *

Damage

I stomp the ground twice & think of you.
 I kiss your tree & bid the message be sent.
 My belly & heart & loins cry for you til I convulse.
 Your absence flails me raw til I smile.
 I dream your dreams, curse the wilds of life's mystery.
 Our love an egg cracking open, cage broken. Blinding sunlight.

* * *

Vigilance

Tis nothing but desire makes it
 so. The flame touched to candle,
 or skin, scripture, cookstove.

The face drawn close with fingers
 among shadows, a radio's smooth
 purr. The hum of things invisible.

Or the hands bound & the sunshine
 taken like a stolen bottle. A moment's
 beast lunges, & again. Passed on, disappears.

Tis everything desire has made so,
 & many things no law or guru could
 explain. Magicks in clean water.

Manias formed among two hands
 grasped & a midnight's smile. Vows
 unending though sieged by every reason.

Tis nothing desire can do to untwist
 its wily coiling selves. We met.
 We clotted. Moons & moons of this called history.

Tis nothing but desire makes it so.
 A chant for your protection, & for
 mine own. A hope greenest at well's bottom.

A promise to remember your butterfly &
 your beast. Call it desire, affliction,
 disease. Call it love. Keep chanting.

A spray of fingers and twining of faith to heal you.
 The beast that tears & smacks will
 never tame but can learn a better dance.

We met. We clotted. Now a chant for
 your protection, & for my own. A vow
 unending I pledge to you, no guile, dream's reasons.

Tis everything desire has made so.
 This world crawls with armies, & prophets,
 all shadowed by beasts, alert to tear, or learn.

Let it go. Let it be. Neither hurry nor
 slow. Tonight I need not sing for you, or
 protect you, but I do. The beast has made me, & made me so.

* * *

First Spring Song

Love sticks hard. We each need to keep
 breathing. Today I watch snow & pretty
 branches. The drip of yesterday on wet
 grass. How you looked in a picture brushes at
 me over & over. Words within say "await,"
 sheets of dreams hush "let it be." What's coming more
 a roar than a song. An ache. A collision. A shine.

* * *

Second Spring Song

She holds a seed in one hand, a pen
in the other, practices one new name,
then another. Dark eyes chant for
her tribe to near, breasts & cheeks
for the artist's fingers, fancies for freedom,
memories for the burn, new days for hope.

She watches bare trees poke greenly toward
the sky, fingers two seeds now, blows out pen
after pen. Serve! Sing! Snap! Flow. Dark hair
brambling around her in the coastal air,
limbs ferocious for new quests, queer trails,
glints in the forest, freakish wonder.

Bells within hustle for a stranger kind of time,
foretell days carved & shaped with tools of light.
Three seeds jingle in her hand as she mulls
what to offer, who to receive. What to be
& how to read the patterns. Whose story her mirror
is telling. How to claim what is hers.

Neither hurry nor slow. Study & doubt
what the visible confesses but halfly.
Memory a guide, faith a guru, love a comforting noise.
Now four seeds in her pocket, two pens,
an orchid & a ribbon in her hair. She
hums brightly among her roots & wings.

When dreams riddle darkly, call for
love, cry for protection, breach the artist's
door & renew shared vow. Five seeds equal
not the senses love ignites. She will take him
fiercely, eat his skin, his soil, his flame.
Beg. Praise. Her tribe will slowly collect.

She curls among her seeds tonight,
 creatures all ferocious to burst, to bloom.
 Clad but in notions, lit by the moon,
 calm awhile til a wiggle, & a run,
 & a flash. What next? What then? Nobody
 knows! Nobody can tell!

* * *

Faith

Faith: stunned by firecrackers, stunned by
 sunlight. A kiss murmured in shadows.
 Dusk radiates curtained windows, plunges
 within, crushes & drinks the dreaming
 vessel, neutrals the poison, extracts
 the despair. Leaves evidence for later hours.

Faith: neon libraries in crumbling cities. Crowds
 in arenas gilt with monster flashes. Roar.
 Rise. She reads her nocturnes, sleeps hotly with
 her secrets. Her lace falls off the world as
 he gathers stars, bouquets of crimson feathers.
 She nods & wakes up. Yes. Yes to what gallops nearer.

Faith: what strands & glues & praises become a nest.
 The ways our future resembles tonight.
 The first moon we share. The last. The countless
 our children will mind as we sleep. She leaves
 many pages blank for pictures of their dogs,
 scraps from festivals, lucky spells.

Faith: a thousand miles, a truck, a wallet.
 Days of soup & cornfields til we meet. A chant
 for your protection, & one for my own.
 A vow unending I pledge to you. No guile.
 Poppies, elixirs, the fistless want of my nocturnes
 & pens. All my melodies. All yours now.

Faith: when you tire, when you roam, when
 you return. Stunned & helpless. I am haven.
 Burnt & shaken. I am home. Hungry, smirking,
 ferocious. I am your wish. As you take me,
 gently maul, more bones, more blood, I serve
 you that I may keep you. That I may learn.

Call you my own. Faith: flow in shadows,
 laughter, alone. She moves among trees
 as I listen, whispers greetings, caresses.
 She makes a song, & another, needs
 my help, needs her own. Faith a viper in
 the grass, when it chooses, when it refrains.

* * *

Requited Heat

True love waits. Calls every new day
 a resurrection, every pine & birch
 a still mania of kind, every flaming
 butterfly a twin passion toward freedom
 & rest, til a collision, one with the other,
 a true love who yowls, with heat, & awaits.

Pine & birch, fierce & fumble, true love
 burns from the skin & raises smoke,
 roars & rhymes, chants tribes of bolts,
 summons dreams in flickers, better
 worlds, there are better worlds, songs
 which heal, touch that redeems.

True love lets go, keeps, marries
 on solstice & equinox, rages crimson
 pleasures in the fields of brightest
 moon, true love without garments
 kneel before each other, furious, raw,
 stains & aches, separation, & impact.

True love waits, hard, wet, longing,
 neither life nor death without each
 other, in absence glowing with torn
 brightness, barren laughter, deeds
 briefly fine then bound for shed's
 dust or attic's rot.

True love touches true love's cheek.
 I appear to you, tonight, monumental,
 & touch your cheek. Wherever my hand
 drifts, your blood comes. Listen as
 I watch you , true love, there is breath.
 There is heartbeat. Resurrection. New spring.

Then again, just a room. The renewed entreaties
 of a life mild with friendly noise.
 True love waits, listens for the path,
 little lost for the stumbling away,
 torrid & shrieking the coming nights of
 reunion, years of hard bliss. Shock of true love, renewed.

* * *

Vow

Neither life nor death without you,
 by brightest moon or darkest.

No path from midnight to morning,
 from starfall to dream's daze.

No hands we feel nor lights for song
 nor fire for dance & meat.

Then our vow renewed & the dark places
 within shiver hard, & recede.

The night nods, & gives way, opens
 again to our protection, chants & nocturnes.

We create each other anew, from oak leaves
& black ink. Longing breast & spiraling light.

* * *

Possession

Breast fierces for breast, fingers for fingers,
tongue for lips, skin smokes with want,
desire the fuel from abyss to abyss,
bed or earth the pyre, true love cannot
be scratched from the blood, true love
a clash of birthing loins, new haven shaped

by immolation. the city a crossing of electric
rods & wild flows, creatures thrashing powers,
shadows beating shadows, prayer in a thrust,
desolation in withdrawal, hope in a blind
kiss, in how I take your hands again & how
we will not let go.

How I learn your curves, how you study my
breath, how the world allows what we insist.
My songs about old men & candy canes pink
your face with laughter. I dress you in blooms
& shaman elixirs. You moan for more. You give
me what's left. We share secrets like water.

Our heat joins in shiver, vibrating in
ocean waves & chanting moonlight.
Love leaves nothing infirm to live.
Love plants, dances, makes. Love teaches
why, desire makes it so. What scars remain
when every wall is down now ours to bear,

to clean, to own. Perhaps a morning many
 hours hence, a meal, a marketplace,
 a pipe passed on a harbor's bench. Apples &
 ferryboats. Music for tramps, pilgrims, &
 freaks. Perhaps yesterday's clouds remain
 to mumble of context & continuity. Perhaps

you ask me: what do we have? I say we have
 love. Only love. Dream of the heat of the world.
 Love. We have only love. The persistent & samely
 shaped stains in things. Love. We are now only
 love. A rampage, a gleam, a way. Love. Only love.
 Cryptic twining, a gift, great lights, new language.

New dream. Bigger dream. No longer a dream
 at all. Faith. What happens when faith explodes.

* * *

Chant

Call it a chant. Call it a wound.
 Call it love. Glistening berries in your
 dreams. Fire warming a mourning family.
 Call it my vow unending to your possibilities,
 to you as raging sunshine, diminishing
 butterfly. Everything twists. Call it a chant.

Call it love.

Bring your brutaed thighs, your forlorn depths,
 bring them to me, bring flowers & mushrooms,
 wear the dress you dream me seeing you wear
 the day we wed, the day we make our baby,
 bring your princess highs & vacant hours &
 suicide plans & watercolors of our love

painted on bark. Soon we'll nod & call it a life.

Watch me approach you in return,
 watch my face clown its adoration &
 feel my hands growl & pursue, watch
 my will melt in sugary swoon & how
 my lips continue to stroke you long
 past midnight's dour & dawn's exhaustion.

Open the curtains. Yet another day. Dance. Wiggle.

We'll go, hurry for the milk, the bread,
 talk about our many endings, talk
 about what will not quit, talk about who
 we used to be, wonder what we are.
 Befriend each other anew. Decide not
 to come down this time. Call our love

a carnival in the desert. Another breath. Another.

Maybe right now just a couch & a silken
 rose. A wish for stars to log our chamber,
 for trees to cede us our place in the circle.
 Maybe right now a chant hidden among
 heartbeats, a wound by pill unsolved but mute.
 A fire remembered, a vow still fierce.

Call it love. Call it a chant. Everything twists.

* * *

Prayer

Universe we beseech thee, midst
 the jungles & caverns of beasts we contrive

midst our guilt & rage & desire & hope

midst our tenderest need to create
 & hold

midst our dreams roaring wide our
angels, prophets, statesmen, warriors

midst the earth we fondle & ravage
for its mystery and innocence ungiven, unslaked

midst whatever we have left in this
ragged endtime & a new distant song

Universe, we beseech thee to love &
protect us. To give us what we
refuse ourselves for now. Acceptance. Love. Home.

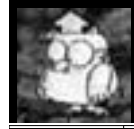


To be continued in *Cenacle* / 50 / December 2003





RAYMOND SOULARD, JR.



SECRET JOY AMONGST THESE TIMES: THE HISTORY OF SCRIPTOR PRESS, 1995 TO THE PRESENT

*"Think for yourself
& question authority"*
—Dr. Timothy Leary

Chapter Five

continued from
The Cenacle / 48 / April 2003

In 1998, *The Cenacle* reached a level of self-actualization far beyond its first three years. Each contributor shined, more than once. Looking back on this year, I am very happy.

There was no reason to continue the magazine except to push the limits of what it was about. With a tiny circulation, not made for sale, no advertising, *The Cenacle* is about artistic growth, about art, transcendence. Each of the year's six issues raises the bar. *Cenacle* 24-25 Winter 1998 features a color cover by Barbara Brannon & her rendition of Mark Shorette's excellent poem "Sophia's Sestina" as centerfold. *Cenacle* 26 April 1998 features a Seattle travel journal collaboration between Brannon, Ric Amante, & me, plus another centerfold, this time with art by Mark Shorette. *Cenacle* 27 June 1998 has Barbara Brannon's Orpheus cover, Rodin centerfold, "Golden Gate Notebook," plus my Orpheus poems & acid photography, and Jim Burke's record Ø (Null Set One) on the accompanying cassette. *Cenacle* 28-29 Summer 1998 features the poetry and prose of Joe Ciccone with illustrations by Barbara Brannon



plus a “psychedelic dialogue” between Ciccone and me on the cassette. *Cenacle* 30 October 1998 features Brannon’s Chicago travel journal &



“Psychedelic Dialogue #2.” Finally, *Cenacle* 31 December 1998 features an issue-length project involving my “Immutable Phalanx” letter & the variety of contributors’ replies.

What made *The Cenacle* successful this year was that I was eager to experiment with new ideas in every issue, move pieces around, stir up the dust so the magazine wouldn’t become sedimented. It became a challenge each issue to do something new, to keep long-running features fresh, & to decide which newer features from recent issues were worth pursuing.

All this conceptualizing came down, for the most part, to challenging my contributors to go further with their art. This was a year-long effort that concluded triumphantly with the massive 150-page-plus *Cenacle* 31 December 1999.

Ric Amante was now settled in a good home & job out in the Seattle area. He would board a ferry boat twice daily to travel across the Puget Sound to work. He delighted in many ways in this trip: the beauty of Mt. Rainier, the play of seagulls & seals near the boat, & the queerness of the many shifty or just strange individuals he’d meet while smoking a cigarette in the boat’s stern.

In *Cenacle* 24-25, however, there appeared a piece that he introduced rather than wrote. Ric had often told me of his long-passed friend Frank Arcuri’s amazing life, many talents, abilities, & visions. Ric’s introduction to Frank’s letter was pointedly insightful:

More than anyone else I’ve ever known, Frank Arcuri lived out his truth in a way that was so uninfluenced by and unconcerned with both temporal movements in the arts, morals, or consciousness in general and those timeless (yet often pompous) verities of being (be they of love, fear, acknowledgment of beauty, etc.,etc.), that to be with him was to enter a world of possibilities that would challenge and often alter your conception of reality. . .

Arcuri’s writing is funny & in reading it one can see where Ric’s prose style may have in part been influenced:

It rains, it rains, I love my hotel. It is dirt cheap (\$32 a week), and all filled with retired Chinese sailors. I have found a great job in a fish house on the dock. Tomorrow is my first day at

work. I bought rubber boots. I'll send a picture in my new sea drag.

Jim Burke's letters appeared in five of *The Cenacle's* six 1998 issues. He addresses his attention most often to two topics: the nature of time & reality, & the importance of psychedelic drugs. Regarding the first of these he writes:

We must slow things down to observe, and to confront ourselves. One of the most efficient ways to achieve this is through the use of psychedelic substances.

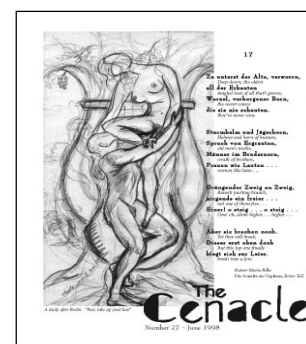
He continues, relating time to psychedelics:

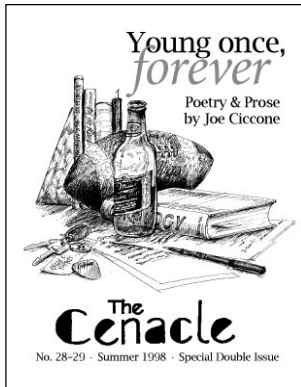
Time has no awareness of us, it does not function in the corporeal sense. But time has vibrations and those drugs alter our perception of them.

& in the following passage he states one of his main theses most directly:

To be aware of existence is precious. We exist in the moment and this is all we need to reconcile ourselves to inevitable change. The unconditional awareness of existence, and the resulting benefits to mankind, can probably be achieved only through the mass introduction of psychedelic substances in our culture. Our existence is so fleeting.

These letters were important to publish because they contain good writing & deep thought but also, frankly, they advocate artfully the sacredness & importance of psychedelic substances. Interest in LSD, mescaline, peyote, psilocybin mushrooms & the like has grown at century's turn to levels not reached since the late 1960s. Those, like Burke & myself, who contend that these substances are both powerful & good nonetheless still stand in opposition to the government & much of society. Only by presenting our case coherently & forcefully & consistently may we get more people to listen & consider our views. We know that America since the 1960s has been a turned-on country, especially in its cultural aspects; seeking to convince people of this, show them the obvious—for example, how utterly common & influential is the use of LSD & mushrooms among writers, musicians, filmmakers, artists, & actors—is an effort that is being made in the trenches of American society every day. Timothy Leary wrote in 1989 that “the influence of psychedelic drugs on art, music, literature, fashion, language, electronic graphics, film, television commercials, holistic medicine, ecological





awareness, & New-Age psychology has been so pervasive has to be invisible.”¹ Further, battling the government’s vial propaganda that dangerously, foolishly, & falsely links sacred substances such as the various psychedelics, marijuana, & MDMA (Ecstasy) with totally destructive drugs like heroin & cocaine is a vital activity. Burke’s letters argue that turned-on art is good art, that psychedelically awake individuals are among the most perceptive & conscientious persons in human society. Burke’s letters praise

psychedelics for their help in his more deeply understanding himself, his fellow men & women, loving nature, & pursuing his music relentlessly whatever obstacles life may present.

Cenacle 27’s cassette featured Burke’s *Ø1* (Null Set One).

Containing songs composed by CSNY, Neil Young, The Beatles, The Who, Pete Townshend, & Burke himself, he used his recently purchased 4-track tape recorder to produce a more ambitious musical project that any he’d done is his 45 years.

Joe Ciccone was the young fellow I’d met at Emerson College in the fall of 1997. His poetry & prose appears in five of six 1998 *Cenacles* including the Summer 1998 issue “Young Once, Forever: Poetry & Prose by Joe Ciccone.” Just 23 years old, but enormously talented, Ciccone’s poems have a fresh, vital sensibility while also reflecting his deep reading into Rimbaud, Rilke, Merwin, & Ginsberg. In *Cenacle 28-29* I worked with him to fashion a book that would capture his talent & vision in their first bright burning. Illustrated by Barbara Brannon, the book contains 25 poems of wildly various lengths (ranging from 9 lines to 18 pages), plus Ciccone’s travel journal, “Further and Further into the Infinity of My Own Mad Circle: Fragments from a Western Journal, 1998,” which concludes:

*and I was tired and I was going home now and what is home
but a broad corner of everywhere and a bridge where traffic
is picking up now faraway and there’s a streetcleaner and no
one is there and I am there and I think of my family asleep in
new jersey and my friends in every last crevice of america
and ray is asleep now in malden and pat is getting ready to
go to work and i’m flying now and i’m somewhere over iowa
and I know that below me jack and the children are still crying
and we will find the pearl and i’m on the ground now and i’m*

¹ Timothy Leary, *Chaos & Cyber Culture*, Berkeley, CA: Ronin Publishing Company, 1994, p. 68.

somewhere in massachusetts and all of a sudden there is movement in all directions and now I am no longer travelling but frozen in a taxicab sharing a ride with a college girl going back into her dream that will die too and I look over and i'm so tired now and she's doing a crossword puzzle, in ink.

& I think that this passage as much as any of the poems captures a young poet/visionary ascending.

Barbara Brannon created all six of the 1998 covers & inspired me to spend much more time with proofreading, layout, & design. As important, her contributions to the contents themselves were vital & good. Of especial note were her color cover & color illustrations of Shorette's "Sophia's Sestina" for *Cenacle* 24-25; her "Golden Gate Notebook" for *Cenacle* 27, a series of photos, drawings, & prose recounting a trip to San Francisco created with Photoshop & QuarkXpress; & her cover & illustrations in *Cenacle* 31 of my "Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre" series of poems. Barbara's artistry & knowledge helped *The Cenacle* come into its own.

Gerry Dillon has previously contributed an occasional poem or short piece but the fictions he published in *Cenacles* 24-25 & 31 were of a higher order. "Psiren" & its sequel tell the story of a robot "galli-slave" & his companion, Patti, a woman with psionic powers, and of their adventures in a murky, malevolent future Boston:

To survive in the Open Cities one must belong to a sect, a maquiladora, or a clan. I belong to myself; I'm atomic, a modern, human lone wolf.

As of this writing, I am awaiting the third installment of Dillon's science fiction saga.

Ralph H. Emerson, too, had contributed pieces to *The Cenacle*; his most successful contribution to date turned out to be a piece he'd written back in 1982 when he was 17, called "My Return to the Stage." A funny, bittersweet memoir that is engaging from its opening:

Autumn of 1982, my senior year of high school. During the past six or so months I became interested in Germany of the 1930s, which is excusable since we are separated from it by half a century. I also became slightly interested in Kim Seravona in my English class, probably in part because she was on that trip that my class took to see Evita in November.

The story has a coda, too, written in 1998, that nicely closes the story.

The musical was a success for me too. I was wanted at last, and the praise and affection from the rest

of the cast that winter finally redeemed my lonely adolescence. Reading my story now, I see how fragile was the thread of circumstances that led me in: only Kim's vivaciousness beckoned me on here, only Frank's generosity nudged me there, only this, only that, a trail of chance meetings and unprecedented whims that lasted until my name was safely on the cast list only hours before vacations began. I must have sensed the miraculousness of this even then, and this account that I wrote a week later must have been nothing less than a prayer of thanks. Slender was the thread, but it held. May the threads that lead you to your joys, my readers, hold as well.

Mark Shorette's work in the '98 *Cenacles* well complemented some of his earliest contributions. His "Sophia's Sestina" so impressed me that I decided to ask Barbara Brannon to create a full color design for it, the first such piece in the magazine.

*In the light muted blue by ancient glass
light taking on strength as the sky is dyed salmon
as the air is embalmed with the scent of roasted pumpkin
Sophia's memorials endure across the landscape—
slowly disappearing, yet renewed by their own passing
for she only endures in her own mortality*

It was a successful experiment, and would lead to more such forays into full-color work within the magazine's pages as well as on its covers.

In *Cenacle* 26, Mark & I went further, publishing four of his poems, his metaphorically elaborate review of the film *Ma Vie En Rose*, & his sketch of a female nude based upon a photo in *Playboy* magazine. These three pieces constituted a cluster centerfold, all related to a central carnal mysticism which Shorette embraces:

*I have come to believe that dualism separates the "world"
from spirit, body from soul, and regards the former as an evil
to be resisted: this may be the most pernicious theological
concept ever developed. God is in the masculine, the
feminine, the body, the blood, the soul, the ether. We don't
need to seek the Tao, or God's will, whatever we wish to call
it. It is already quite within us.*

An editor succeeds best when he has brought out as much variety & depth from his writer/artist as possible. Publishing his fiction, poetry, film

reviews, prose, & artwork was the result of a successful collaboration of editor & artist, friend & friend, open to anything and everything that Art has to offer.

1998 was a great year for *The Cenacle* because it was a great year for me. Because it was a great year for me, it was a great year for my writing. It was a great year for my writing because my life increasingly lacked the extraneous. I discovered, in fact, that I could no longer handle the extraneous— & labored mightily to expel it.

From January to April I worked as an editorial assistant on the *Boston Review*, a bi-monthly Cambridge political & cultural journal. I was given the task of developing their website, & learned HTML coding along the way. I was also taking a class in QuarkXpress at Emerson College during this time. In April I changed my degree program from the disappointing diaper-changing MFA to the Master's of Arts in Writing & Publishing. Also in April, building on what I'd been learning, I laid out



much of *Cenacle* 26 April 1998 (3rd anniversary issue) in Quark, & founded *The ElectroLounge* website (www.geocities.com/scriptorpress), an exciting entity I am still learning how to exploit. In March I visited Ric Amante in Seattle, my first West Coast trip since 1995, & together we ventured into the poetry scene out there; in May I went down to Georgia to visit Barbara Brannon & we checked out poetry nights in South Carolina & Georgia, & organized a poetry night in Macon, Georgia. I read voraciously especially the inspiring essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson. I continued to refigure and renew my consciousness & deepen my perceptions with LSD. Art, publishing, LSD, technology, focus. . . my life was simplifying, integrating, transcending. In the opening of *Cenacle* 24-25 I wrote:

I'm pushing toward a greater awareness, toward writing better than ever before, grounded more deeply in enacting one simple belief: Tell the Truth. Whether prose or poetry or fiction, or editing The Cenacle, or whatever, Tell the Truth.

Aside from continuing to publish my *Cement Park* & Nat Perfect stories in that issue, I began a new feature called "Notes from New England":

This series is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

This has become a very important element of *The Cenacle* for in it I am able to assess the period of time between issues & include work I wouldn't otherwise have a place for. In *Cenacle* 26 I prefaced work in "Notes from New England" written under the influence of LSD thus:

The following account was written under the influence of LSD. It is the first extensive piece of writing I have ever done while tripping, and adds to what I maintain is the rather small number of contemporary psychedelic writings available. Acid does not at all lead one into writing whilst experiencing it—to making music, making love, flirting with the cosmos or reliving one's own birth, certainly, but beyond poetry, there are few well-known and available accounts of long prose pieces written while tripping—tho many will write about the experience afterward—Aldous Huxley, Tom Wolfe, Robert Heinlein, Ken Kesey, John Lilly are just a few of these persons.

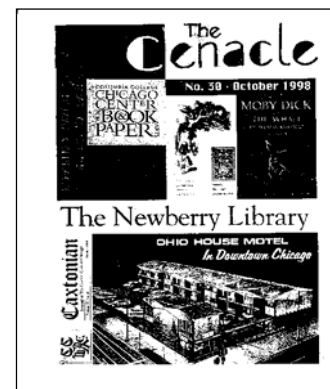
This led in *Cenacle* 27 June 1997 to a lengthy acid poem in "Notes," written on the first day of spring, my first poetic effort written while tripping, concluding:

*the empty table, its importance
as I sit here hard acid-tripping
first day of spring, snowfall,
all is perfect, beautiful*

("the music's an open door. . .")

In *Cenacle* 30 October 1998 "Notes from New England" was 36 pages long, & was mostly devoted to accounting for the extreme depression I suffered through in the summer of 1998 & the miraculous experience I had up in Vermont that kept me from dire actions:

I remember thinking, at the lowest point, that my life felt like a movement through a series of rooms each of which I dwelled in for a time & thence to the next room. . . but at the selfsame moment I experienced myself to be in my "final room," from which I could not retreat nor was there a door available to pass on from it. . . there is no final room. That's not how the universe operates. That's the fear and remorse of darkened parts of one's



psyche taking over, the cosmic fatalist in each of us. You always have a choice.

Finally, in *Cenacle* 31 December 1998 I discussed plans for 1999 including “*Cenacle* ‘chapbooks,’ little books of writing/art by various individuals to be distributed widely including at various bookstores— each of us will eventually have at least one.” These plans I carried out.

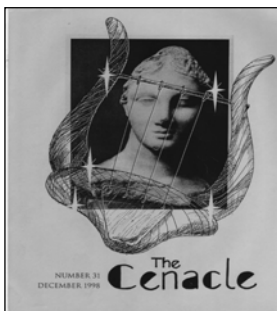
I finally began writing poetry I am proud enough to still discuss. In *Cenacle* 27 I published “Resurrection, Now,” a poem that I believe reports comprehensibly from within the psychedelic experience, something that is often said cannot be done. In *Cenacle* 31 appeared my “Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre” sequence, designed & illustrated by Barbara Brannon. It is a series of poetic variations based on the Orpheus & Eurydice myth, with hints of the Eleusian Mysteries, written from the depths of my depression that summer: looking down into the maw, looking up at the stars, deciding. . . deciding. . .

Cenacle 31 was a consummation of the expanding ambitiousness of *The Cenacle*. Throughout the year I published “Immutable Phalanx” letters, usually addressed to about a half-dozen of my friends. For this issue, I asked my many contributors of the year each to respond to the letter as well as including a separate piece to illustrate their several points. I wrote, in part:

I don't believe Art is for the keeping. I don't believe Art is for the selling. I don't believe Art is any more vulnerable than its maker. I don't believe that Persons doing Art should be fearful. I don't believe that Art has a cap or a floor. I don't believe that any of us are making enough Art or permeating enough of our lives with Art.

The responses were various as the individuals involved:

Joe Ciccone wrote: “There is a world to possess within our hearts and render in an artistic form, so I don’t buy the notions of writer’s block. Go out and look at a tree. If you can’t write, draw. If you can’t draw, dance. Render! Render! Render! (in any way). If you’ve done it before, do it again.



. . . and better!” Gerry Dillon wrote: “Humans need to go beyond the mundane, to strive, to improve themselves and their lives.” Barbara Brannon wrote: “I was the apple of my parents’ eyes, the hope of all that any happiness was possible. I sensed, from the earliest consciousness of the world that I can remember, that art was my calling.” Ric Amante wrote: “To be able, willing, and desirous to chronicle one’s real and

imaginary life, and to do so with reverence to an aesthetic and bereft force, bereft because shorn of anything unnecessary to true unity— the blazing, apocalyptic merging and defenestrations of the wilting ego as it flies on up to the fullness of God. . . . Perhaps this is art. . . .” Jim Burke wrote: “Of course art is not for the keeping or more vulnerable than its maker. We can never make enough art or ‘permeate’ enough of our lives with it.” Mark Shorette wrote:

But beauty— then as now— remained.

Beauty.

crowd.

me.

till.

I.

die.

Finally, Ralph Emerson wrote: “The last [Immutable] Phalanx letter was splendid. I assent to almost all of it, and I’m proud of you. I see exalted sentiments powerfully expressed. But pray do not get too much further into mysticism just yet or I will not be able to follow you.”

At 152 pages, *Cenacle* 31 is a triumph for Art, for friendship, for faith in the miraculous & mysterious in life, for the potency of gathering creating souls in person, on the page, on the Internet, working one & all toward re-invigoration of the world.



To be continued in *Cenacle* / 50 / December 2003

DR. HUSTON SMITH



DO DRUGS HAVE RELIGIOUS IMPORT?

The Journal of Philosophy,
Vol LXI, No. 18, September 17, 1964

Until six months ago, if I picked up my phone in the Cambridge area and dialed KISS-BIG a voice would answer, "Ifif." These were coincidences: KISS-BIG simply happened to be the letter equivalents of an arbitrarily assigned telephone number, while I.F.I.F. represented the initials of an organization with the improbable name of the International Federation for Internal Freedom. But the coincidences were apposite to the point of being poetic. "Kiss big" caught the euphoric, manic, life-embracing attitude that characterized this most publicized of the organizations formed to explore the newly synthesized consciousness-changing substances, while the organization itself was surely one of the "iffy-est" phenomena to appear on our social and intellectual scene in some time. It produced the first firings in Harvard's history, an ultimatum to get out of Mexico in five days, and "the miracle of Marsh Chapel" in which during a two-and-one-half hour Good Friday service ten theological students and professors ingested psilocybin and were visited by what they generally reported to be the deepest religious experiences of their lives.

Despite the last of these phenomena and its numerous if less dramatic parallels, students of religion appear by and large to be dismissing the psychedelic drugs which have sprung to our attention in the sixties as having little religious relevance. The position taken in one of the most forward-looking volumes of theological essays to have appeared in recent years² accepts R. C. Zaehner's *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* as having "fully examined and refuted" the religious claims for mescaline

² *Soundings: Essays Concerning Christian Understandings*, edited by A. R. Vidler. Cambridge: The University Press, 1962, The statement cited appears on page 72.

which Aldous Huxley sketched in *The Doors of Perception*. This closing of the case strikes me as premature, for it looks as if the drugs have light to throw on the history of religion, the phenomenology of religion, the philosophy of religion, and the practice of the religious life itself.

I. Drugs and Religion Viewed Historically

In his trial-and-error life explorations man almost everywhere has stumbled upon connections between vegetables (eaten or brewed) and actions (yogic breathing exercises, whirling dervish dances, flagellations) which altered states of consciousness. From the psychopharmacological standpoint we now understand these states to be the products of changes in brain chemistry. From the sociological perspective we see that they tended to be connected in some way with religion. If we discount the wine used in our own communion services, the instances closest to us in time and space are the peyote of The Native American (Indian) Church and Mexico's 2,000-year-old "sacred mushrooms," the latter rendered in Aztec as "God's flesh," (a striking parallel to "the body of our Lord" in the Christian Eucharist). Beyond these neighboring instances lie the *soma* of the Hindus; the *haoma* and hemp, identical with and better known as marijuana, of the Zoroastrians; the Dionysus of the Greeks who "everywhere. . .taught men the culture of the vine and the mysteries of his worship and everywhere [was] accepted as a god"³; the *benzoin* of Southeast Asia, Zen's tea whose fifth cup purifies and whose sixth "calls to the realm of the immortals"⁴; the *pituri* of the Australian aborigines; and probably the mystic *kykeon* that was eaten and drunk at the climactic close of the sixth day of the Eleusinian mysteries.⁵ There is no need to extend the list, especially as Philippie de Felice's comprehensive study of the subject, *Poisons Sacrés, Ivresses Divines (Sacred Poisons, Divine Raptures)*, is about to appear in English.

More interesting than the fact that consciousness-changing devices have been linked with religion is the possibility that they actually initiated many of the religious perspectives which, taking root in history, continued after their psychedelic origins were forgotten. Bergson saw the first movement of Hindus and Greeks toward "dynamic religion" as associated

³ Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology*. New York, Mentor Books, 1940, p. 55.

⁴ Quoted in Alan Watts, *The Spirit of Zen*. New York: Grove Press, 1958, p. 110.

⁵ Mylonas, George. *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961, p. 284.

with the “divine rapture” found in intoxicating beverages⁶; more recently Robert Graves, Gordon Wasson and Alan Watts have suggested that most religions arose from such chemically-induced theophanies. Mary Barnard is the most explicit proponent of this thesis. “Which. . . was more likely to happen first,” she asks in the autumn 1963 journal of *Phi Beta Kappa*: “the spontaneously generated idea of an afterlife in which the disembodied soul, liberated from the restrictions of time and space, experiences eternal bliss, or the accidental discovery of hallucinogenic plants that give a sense of euphoria, dislocate the center of consciousness, and distort time and space, making them balloon outward in greatly expanded vistas?” Her own answer is that “the [latter] experience might have had... an almost explosive effect on the largely dormant minds of men, causing them to think of things they had never thought of before. This, if you like, is direct revelation.” Her use of the subjunctive “might” renders this formulation of her answer equivocal, but she concludes her essay on a note that is completely unequivocal: “Looking at the matter coldly, unintoxicated and unentranced, I am willing to prophesy that fifty theo-botanists working for fifty years would make the current theories concerning the origins of much mythology and theology as out-of-date as pre-Copernican astronomy.”⁷

This is an important hypothesis—one which must surely engage the attention of historians of religion for some time to come. But as I am concerned here only to spot the points at which the drugs erupt onto the field of serious religious study, not to ride the geysers to whatever height, I shall not pursue Miss Barnard’s thesis. Having located what appears to be the crux of the historical question, namely the extent to which drugs not merely duplicate or simulate theologically sponsored experiences but generate or shape theologies themselves, I turn to phenomenology.

II. Drugs and Religion Viewed Phenomenologically

Phenomenology attempts a careful description of human experience. The question the drugs pose for the phenomenology of religion, therefore, is whether the experiences they induce differ from religious experiences reached *au naturel*, and if so how.

Even the Bible notes that chemically induced psychic states bear

⁶ *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1935, pp. 206-212.

⁷ “The God in the Flowerpot.” *The American Scholar* (Autumn 1963), pp. 584, 586.

some resemblance to religious ones. Peter had to appeal to a circumstantial criterion, the early hour of the day, to defend those who were caught up in the Pentecostal experience against the charge that they were merely drunk: "These men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day" (Acts 2:15); and Paul initiates the comparison when he admonishes the Ephesians not to "get drunk with wine. . . but [to] be filled with the spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Are such comparisons, paralleled in the accounts of virtually every religion, superficial? How far can they be pushed?

Not all the way, students of religion have thus far insisted. With respect to the new drugs, Professor R. C. Zaehner has drawn the line emphatically. "The importance of Huxley's *Doors of Perception*," he writes, "is that in it the author clearly makes the claim that what he experienced under the influence of mescaline is closely comparable to a genuine mystical experience. If he is right. . . the conclusions. . . are alarming."⁸ Zaehner thinks that Huxley is not right, but Zaehner is mistaken.

There are, of course, innumerable drug experiences which haven't a religious feature; they can be sensual as readily as spiritual, trivial as readily as transforming, capricious as readily as sacramental. If there is one point about which every student of the drugs agrees, it is that there is no such thing as the drug experience per se—no experience which the drugs, as it were, merely secrete. Every experience is a mix of three ingredients: drug, set (the psychological makeup of the individual) and setting (the social and physical environment in which it is taken). But given the right set and setting, the drugs can induce religious experiences indistinguishable from ones that occur spontaneously. Nor need set and setting be exceptional. The way the statistics are currently running, it looks as if from one-fourth to one-third of the general population will have religious experiences if they take the drugs under naturalistic conditions, meaning by this conditions in which the researcher supports the subject but doesn't try to influence the direction his experience will take. Among subjects who have strong religious inclinations to begin with, the proportion of those having religious experiences jumps to three-fourths. If they take them in settings which are religious too, the ratio soars to nine out of ten.

How do we know that the experiences these people have really are religious? We can begin with the fact that they say they are. The "one-

⁸ *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane*. New York: Oxford Galaxy Book, 1961, p. 12.

fourth to one-third of the general populous” figure is drawn from two sources. Ten months after they had had their experiences, 24 percent of the 194 subjects in a study by the California psychiatrist Oscar Janiger characterized them as having been religious.⁹ Thirty-two percent of the 74 subjects in Ditman and Hayman’s study reported that in looking back on their LSD experience it looked as if it had been “very much” or “quite a bit” a religious experience; 42 percent checked as true the statement that they “were left with a greater awareness of God, or a higher power, or ultimate reality.”¹⁰ The statement that three-fourths of subjects having religious “sets” will have religious experiences comes from the reports of sixty-nine religious professionals who took the drugs while the Harvard project was in progress.¹¹

In the absence of (a) a single definition of a religious experience acceptable to psychologists of religion generally, and (b) foolproof ways of ascertaining whether actual experiences exemplify any definition, I am not sure there is a better way of telling whether the experiences of the 333 men and women involved in the above studies were religious than by noting whether they seemed so to them. But if more rigorous methods are preferred, they exist; they have been utilized and confirm the conviction of the man in the street that drug experiences can indeed be religious. In his doctoral study at Harvard University, Dr. Walter Pahnke worked out a typology of religious experience (in this instance of the mystical variety) based on the classic cases of mystical experiences as summarized in Walter Stace’s *Mysticism and Philosophy*. He then administered psilocybin to ten theology students and professors in the setting of a Good Friday service. The drug was given “double-blind,” meaning that neither Dr. Pahnke nor his subjects would know which ten were getting psilocybin and which ten placebos to constitute a control group. Subsequently the reports the subjects wrote of their experiences were laid successively before three college-graduate housewives who, without being informed about the nature of the study, were asked to rate each statement as to the degree (strong, moderate, slight, or none) to which it exemplified each of the nine traits of mystical experience as enumerated in the typology of mysticism worked out in advance. When the test of significance was applied to their statistics, it showed that “those subjects who received psilocybin experienced phenomena which

⁹ Quoted in McGlothlin, William H. “Long-lasting Effects of LSD on Certain Attitudes in Normals.” Printed for private distribution by the RAND Corporation, p. 16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 46.

¹¹ Leary, Timothy. “The Religious Experience: Its Production and Interpretation.” *The Psychedelic Review*, vol. I, no. 3 (1964), p. 325.

were indistinguishable from, if not identical with. . . the categories defined by our typology of mysticism.”¹²

With the thought that the reader might like to test his own powers of discernment on the question being considered, I insert here a simple test I gave to a group of Princeton students following a recent discussion sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Society.

Below are accounts of two religious experiences. One occurred under the influence of drugs, one without their influence. Check the one you think was drug-induced.

I

Suddenly I burst into a vast, new, indescribably wonderful universe. Although I am writing this over a year later, the thrill of the surprise and amazement, the awesomeness of the revelation, the engulfment in an overwhelming feeling-wave of gratitude and blessed wonderment, are as fresh, and the memory of the experience is as vivid, as if it had happened five minutes ago. And yet to concoct anything by way of description that would even hint at the magnitude, the sense of ultimate reality. . . this seems such an impossible task. The knowledge which has infused and affected every aspect of my life came instantaneously and with such complete force of certainty that it was impossible, then or since, to doubt its validity.

II

All at once, without warning of any kind, I found myself wrapped in a flame-colored cloud. For an instant I thought of fire. . . the next, I knew that the fire was within myself. Directly afterward there came upon me a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe. Among other things, I did not merely come to believe, but I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter, but is, on the contrary, a living Presence; I became conscious in myself of eternal life . . . I saw that all men are immortal: that the cosmic order is such that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all; that

¹² “Drugs and Mysticism: An Analysis of the Relationship Between Psychedelic Drugs and the Mystical Consciousness.” A thesis presented to the Committee on Higher Degrees in History and Philosophy of Religion, Harvard University, June 1963.

the foundation principle of the world. . . is what we call love, and that the happiness of each and all is in the long run absolutely certain.

On the occasion referred to, twice the number of students (46) answered incorrectly as answered correctly (23). I bury the correct answer in a footnote to preserve the reader's opportunity to test himself.¹³

Why, in the face of this considerable evidence, does Zaehner hold that drug experiences cannot be authentically religious? There appear to be three reasons:

1. His own experience was "utterly trivial." This of course proves that not all drug experiences are religious; it does not prove that no drug experiences are religious.

2. He thinks that the experiences of others which appear to be religious to them are not truly so. Zaehner distinguishes three kinds of mysticism: nature mysticism in which the soul is united with the natural world; monistic mysticism in which the soul merges with an impersonal absolute; and theism in which the soul confronts the living, personal God. He concedes that drugs can induce the first two species of mysticism, but not its supreme instance, the theistic. As proof, he analyzes Huxley's experience as recounted in *The Doors of Perception* to show that it produced at best a blend of nature and monistic mysticism. Even if we were to accept Zaehner's evaluation of the three forms of mysticism, Huxley's case, and indeed Zaehner's entire book, would prove only that not every mystical experience induced by the drugs is theistic. Insofar as Zaehner goes beyond this to imply that drugs do not and cannot induce theistic mysticism, he not only goes beyond the evidence but proceeds in the face of it. Professor Slotkin reports that the peyote Indians "see visions, which may be of Christ Himself. Sometimes they hear the voice of the Great Spirit. Sometimes they become aware of the presence of God and of those personal shortcomings which must be corrected if they are to do His will."¹⁴ And G. M. Carstairs, reporting on the use of psychedelic bhang (marijuana) in India, quotes a Brahmin as saying, "It gives good bhakti. . . . You get a very good bhakti with bhang," bhakti being precisely

¹³ The first account is quoted anonymously in "The Issue of the Consciousness-Expanding Drugs." *Main Currents in Modern Thought* vol. XX, no. 1 (September-October 1963), pp. 10-11. The second experience was that of Dr. R. M. Bucke, the author of *Cosmic Consciousness*, as quoted in James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: The Modern Library, 1902, pp. 390-391. The former experience occurred under the influence of drugs, the latter did not.

¹⁴ Slotkin, James S. *Peyote Religion*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1956.

Hinduism's theistic variant.¹⁵

3. There is a third reason why Professor Zaehner might doubt that drugs can induce experiences that are genuinely mystical. Professor Zaehner is a Roman Catholic, and Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that mystical rapture is a gift of grace and as such can never be reduced to man's control. This may be true; certainly the empirical evidence cited does not preclude the possibility of a genuine ontological or theological difference between natural and drug-induced religious experiences. At this point, however, we are considering phenomenology rather than ontology, description rather than interpretation, and on this level there is no difference. Descriptively, drug experiences cannot be distinguished from their natural religious counterpart. When the current philosophical authority on mysticism, Dr. W. T. Stace, Professor Emeritus at Princeton University, was asked whether the drug experience is similar to the mystical experience, he answered, "It's not a matter of its being *similar* to mystical experience; it *is* mystical experience."

What we seem to be witnessing in Zaehner's *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* is a reenactment of the age-old pattern in the conflict between science and religion. Whenever a new controversy arises, religion's first impulse is to deny the disturbing evidence science has produced. Seen in perspective, Zaehner's refusal to admit that drugs can induce experiences descriptively indistinguishable from those which are spontaneously religious is the current counterpart of the seventeenth century theologians' refusal to look through Galileo's telescope or, when they did, their persistence in dismissing what they saw as machinations of the devil. When the fact that drugs can trigger religious experiences becomes incontrovertible, discussion will move to the more difficult question of how this new fact is to be interpreted. The latter question leads beyond phenomenology into philosophy.

III. Drugs and Religion Viewed Philosophically

Why do people reject evidence? Because they find it threatening, we may suppose. Theologians are not the only professionals to utilize this mode of defense. In his *Personal Knowledge*, Michael Polanyi recounts the way the medical profession ignored such palpable facts as the painless amputation of human limbs, performed before their own eyes in hundreds

¹⁵ "Daru and Bhang." *Quarterly Journal of the Study of Alcohol*. 1954, 15:229.

of successive cases, concluding that the subjects were impostors who were either deluding their physician or colluding with him. One physician, Esdaile, carried out about 300 major operations painlessly under mesmeric trance in India, but neither in India nor in Great Britain could he get medical journals to print accounts of his work. Polanyi attributes this closed-mindedness to “lack of a conceptual framework in which their discoveries could be separated from specious and untenable admixtures.”

The “untenable admixture” in the fact that psychotomimetic drugs can induce religious experience is their apparent implicate: that religious disclosures are no more veridical than psychotic ones. For religious skeptics, this conclusion is obviously not untenable at all; it fits in beautifully with their thesis that *all* religion is at heart an escape from reality. Psychotics avoid reality by retiring into dream worlds of make-believe; what better evidence that religious visionaries do the same than the fact that identical changes in brain chemistry produces both states of mind? Had not Marx already warned us that religion is the “opiate” of the people? Apparently he was more literally accurate than he supposed. Freud was likewise too mild. He “never doubted that religious phenomena are to be understood only on the model of the neurotic symptoms of the individual.”¹⁶ He should have said “psychotic symptoms.”

So the religious skeptic is likely to reason. What about the religious believer? Convinced that religious experiences are not fundamentally delusory, can he admit that psychotomimetic drugs can occasion them? To do so he needs (to return to Polanyi’s words) “a conceptual framework in which [the discoveries can] be separated from specious and untenable admixtures,” the latter being in this case the conclusion that religious experiences are in general delusory.

One way to effect the separation would be to argue that despite phenomenological similarities between natural and drug-induced religious experiences, they are separated by a crucial *ontological* difference. Such an argument would follow the pattern of theologians who argue for the “real presence” of Christ’s body and blood in the bread and wine of the Eucharist despite their admission that chemical analysis, confined as it is to the level of “accidents” rather than “essences,” would not disclose this presence. But this distinction will not appeal to many today, for it turns on an essence-accident metaphysics which is not widely accepted. Instead of fighting a rear-guard action by insisting that if drug and non-drug religious experiences can’t be distinguished empirically there must

¹⁶ *Totem and Taboo*. New York: Modern Library, 1938.

be some trans-empirical factor which distinguishes them and renders the drug experience profane, I wish to explore the possibility of accepting drug-induced experiences as religious in every sense of the word without relinquishing confidence in the truth claims of religious experience generally.

To begin with the weakest of all arguments, the argument from authority: William James didn't discount *his* insights which occurred while his brain chemistry was altered. The paragraph in which he retrospectively evaluates his nitrous oxide experiences has become classic, but it is so pertinent to the present discussion that it merits quoting again.

One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is the question—for they are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness. Yet they may determine attitudes though they cannot furnish formulas, and open a region though they fail to give a map. At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality. Looking back on my own experiences, they all converge toward a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance.¹⁷

To this argument from authority, I add two that try to provide something by way of reasons. Drug experiences that assume a religious cast tend to have fearful and/or beatific features, and each of my hypotheses relates to one of these aspects of the experience.

Beginning with the ominous, "fear of the Lord," awe-ful features, Gordon Wasson, the New York banker-turned-mycologist, describes these as he encountered them in his psilocybin experience as follows: "Ecstasy! In common parlance . . . ecstasy is fun But ecstasy is not fun. Your very soul is seized and shaken until it tingles. After all, who will choose to

¹⁷ *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, op. cit., pp. 378-379.

feel undiluted awe. . . ? The unknowing vulgar abuse the word; we must recapture its full and terrifying sense.” Emotionally, the drug experience can be like having forty-foot waves crash over you for several hours while you cling desperately to a life raft which may be swept from under you at any minute. It seems quite possible that such an ordeal, like any experience of a close call, could awaken rather fundamental sentiments respecting life and death and destiny—and trigger the “no atheists in foxholes” effect. Similarly, as the subject emerges from the trauma and realizes that he is not going to be insane as he had feared, there may come over him an intensified appreciation like that frequently reported by patients recovering from critical illness. “It happened on the day when my bed was pushed out of doors to the open gallery of the hospital,” reads one such report.

I cannot now recall whether the revelation came suddenly or gradually; I only remember finding myself in the very midst of those wonderful moments, beholding life for the first time in all its young intoxication of loveliness, in its unspeakable joy, beauty, and importance. I cannot say exactly what the mysterious change was. I saw no new thing, but I saw all the usual things in a miraculous new light—in what I believe is their true light. I saw for the first time how wildly beautiful and joyous, beyond any words of mine to describe, is the whole of life. Every human being moving across that porch, every sparrow that flew, every branch tossing in the wind, was caught in and was a part of the whole mad ecstasy of loveliness, of joy, of importance, of intoxication of life.¹⁸

If we do not discount religious intuitions because they are prompted by battlefields and *physical* crises; if we regard the latter as “calling us to our senses” more often than they seduce us into delusions, need comparable intuitions be discounted simply because the crises that trigger them are of an inner, *psychic* variety?

Turning from the hellish to the heavenly aspects of the drug experience, *some* of the latter may be explainable by the hypothesis just stated; that is, they may be occasioned by the relief that attends the sense of escape from high danger. But this hypothesis cannot possibly account for *all* the beatific episodes for the simple reason that the positive episodes often come first, or to persons who experience no negative episodes whatever. Dr. Sanford Unger of the National Institute of

¹⁸ Montague, Margaret Prescott. *Twenty Minutes of Reality*. Saint Paul, Minn.: Macalester Park Publishing Company, 1947, pp. 15, 17.

Mental Health reports that among his subjects “50 to 60 percent will not manifest any real disturbance worthy of discussion,” yet “around 75” will have at least one episode in which exaltation, rapture, and joy are the key descriptions.¹⁹ How are we to account for the drug’s capacity to induce peak experiences, such as the following, which are *not* preceded by fear?

*A feeling of great peace and contentment seemed to flow through my entire body. All sound ceased and I seemed to be floating in a great, very still void or hemisphere. It is impossible to describe the overpowering feeling of peace, contentment, and being a part of goodness itself that I felt. I could feel my body dissolving and actually becoming a part of the goodness and peace that was all around me. Words can’t describe this. I feel an awe and wonder that such a feeling could have occurred to me.*²⁰

Consider the following line of argument. Like every other form of life, man’s nature has become distinctive through specialization. Man has specialized in developing a cerebral cortex. The analytic powers of this instrument are a standing wonder, but it seems less able to provide man with the sense that he is meaningfully related to his environment, to life, the world and history in their wholeness. As Albert Camus describes the situation, “If I were . . . a cat among animals, this life would have a meaning, or rather this problem would not arise, for I should belong to this world. I would be this world to which I am now opposed by my whole consciousness.”²¹ Note that it is Camus’ consciousness that opposes him to his world. The drugs do not knock this consciousness out, but while they leave it operative they also activate areas of the brain that normally lie below its threshold of awareness. One of the clearest objective signs that the drugs are taking effect is the dilation they produce in the pupils of the eyes, while one of the most predictable subjective signs is the intensification of visual perception. Both of these responses are controlled by portions of the brain that lie deep, further to the rear than the mechanisms that govern consciousness. Meanwhile we know that the human organism is interlaced with its world in innumerable ways it normally cannot sense through gravitational fields, body respiration, and the like; the list could be multiplied until man’s skin began to seem more like a thoroughfare than a boundary. Perhaps the deeper regions of the

¹⁹ “The Current Scientific Status of Psychedelic Drug Research.” A paper read at the Conference on Methods in Philosophy and the Sciences, New School for Social Research, May 3, 1964.

²⁰ Quoted by Dr. Unger in the paper just mentioned.

²¹ *The Myth of Sisyphus*. New York: Vintage, 1955, p. 38.

brain which evolved earlier and are more like those of the lower animals “If I were . . . a cat . . . I should belong to this world” can sense this relatedness better than can the cerebral cortex which now dominates our awareness. If so, when the drugs rearrange the neurohumors that chemically transmit impulses across synapses between neurons, man’s consciousness and his submerged, intuitive, ecological awareness might for a spell become interlaced. This is, of course, no more than a hypothesis, but how else are we to account for the extraordinary incidence under the drugs of that kind of insight the keynote of which James described as

*invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into one and the same genus, but one of the species, the nobler and better one, is itself the genus, and so soaks up and absorbs its opposites into itself.*²²

IV. The Drugs and Religion Viewed “Religiously”

Suppose that drugs can induce experiences that are indistinguishable from religious ones, and that we can respect their reports. Do they shed any light, not (we now ask) on life, but on the nature of the religious life?

One thing they may do is throw religious experience itself into perspective by clarifying its relation to the religious life as a whole. Drugs appear able to induce religious experiences; it is less evident that they can produce religious lives. It follows that religion is more than religious experiences. This is hardly news, but it may be a useful reminder, especially to those who incline toward “the religion of religious experience,” which is to say toward lives bent on the acquisition of desired states of experience irrespective of their relation to life’s other demands and components.

Despite the dangers of faculty psychology, it remains useful to regard man as having a mind, a will, and feelings. One of the lessons of religious history is that to be adequate a faith must rouse and involve all three components of man’s nature. Religions of reason grow arid; religions of duty, leaden. Religions of experience have their comparable pitfalls, as evidenced by Taoism’s struggle (not always successful) to keep from

²² James, William, *op. cit.* , p. 379.

degenerating into quietism, and the vehemence with which Zen Buddhism has insisted that once students have attained *satori*, they must be driven out of it, back into the world. The case of Zen is especially pertinent here, for it pivots on an enlightenment experience—*satori* or *kensho*—which some (but not all) Zennists says resembles LSD. Alike or different, the point is that Zen recognizes that unless the experience is joined to discipline, it will come to naught.

Even the Buddha . . . had to sit . . . Without *yoriki*, the particular power developed through *zazen* [seated meditation], the vision of oneness attained in enlightenment . . . in time becomes clouded and eventually fades into a pleasant memory instead of remaining an omnipresent reality shaping our daily life . . . To be able to live in accordance with what the Mind's eye has revealed through *satori* requires, like the purification of character and the development of personality, a ripening period of *zazen*.²³

If the religion of religious experience is a snare and a delusion, it follows that no religion that fixes its faith primarily in substances that induce religious experiences can be expected to come to a good end. What promised to be a shortcut will prove to be a short circuit; what began as a religion will end as a religion surrogate. Whether chemical substances can be helpful *adjuncts* to faith is another question. The peyote-using Native American Church seems to indicate that they can be; anthropologists give this church a good report, noting among other things that members resist alcohol and alcoholism better than do non-members.²⁴ The conclusion to which evidence currently points would seem to be that chemicals can aid the religious life, but only where set within a context of faith (meaning by this the conviction that what they disclose is true) and discipline (meaning diligent exercise of the will in the attempt to work out the implications of the disclosures for the living of life in the every day, common sense world).

Nowhere today in Western civilization are these two conditions jointly fulfilled. Churches lack faith in the sense just mentioned, hipsters lack discipline. This might lead us to forget about the drugs, were it not for one fact: the distinctive religious emotion and the one drugs unquestionably can occasion—Otto's *mysterium tremendum, majestas, mysterium fascinans*. In a phrase, the phenomenon of religious awe seems to be declining sharply. As Paul Tillich said in an address to the Hillel Society at Harvard several years ago:

²³ Kapleau, Philip. *Zen Practice and Attainment*. A manuscript in process of publication.

²⁴ Slotkin, James S., *op. cit.*

The question our century puts before us [is]: Is it possible to regain the lost dimension, the encounter with the Holy, the dimension which cuts through the world of subjectivity and objectivity and goes down to that which is not world but is the mystery of the Ground of Being?

Tillich may be right; this may be the religious question of our century. For if (as we have insisted) religion cannot be equated with religious experience, neither can it long survive its absence.



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Jim Burke III lives in West Hartford, Connecticut. His dandy writing & lovely music have been appearing in *The Cenacle* since its inception.

Judih Haggai lives at *Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel*. I had the great luck to meet her & her beloved partner Gad this past summer at Xando's coffeehouse in Hartford, Connecticut. They each & both shine.

Oddbjørn Jensen lives in Aarhus, Denmark. He is a fairly young man & new to composing poetry but much potential lies within him.

Kassandra Kramer lives in Omaha, Nebraska. This issue officially names her *The Cenacle's* assistant editor. Not bad for not yet 20.

Dr. Huston Smith lives in California. He is widely admired for his writings about psychedelics & spirituality.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Plainville, Connecticut. Still. Busy building better shoes for a more permanent run West. A pair for me and one for K.

Embrace it all man

***The pain of loss
The joy of giving
The hate the passion
The depression the joy
It's all part of IT
The cosmic bang smack
Some call it Tao
Some call it God
I call it . . .***

***Someone says BREATHE!!!
Breathe now!
We're alive
Smoking dancing
Drinking freaking
Out in the dark night
Filled with joyful light.***

— Oddbjørn Jensen



everlasting nature which is the cause of all